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THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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"THE DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS" AND
"THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"

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THE GOOD GIFTS OF THE FATHER.

Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.—Jas. i. 17.

THE Bible is full of truths which from their very obviousness are never realized: truths which to a religious mind are self-evident, incontrovertible, not susceptible of proof, lying so deep at the root of all our religious convictions that we never think of pausing to examine them; we take them for granted; they are our axioms of religion. But in taking them for granted, we also lose much; when they meet us in our reading or hearing of Scripture, they are apt to fall dead on our ear; we attach but a vague meaning to them; we never perhaps interpret them to ourselves. Our text is just such an axiom of religion. It is the case with this, as with all very comprehensive truths, that it is accepted readily enough as a general principle; but when it steps down from the region of general law to the sphere of particular application, we are startled to find how little we have hitherto understood, and how little we have really believed it.

I.

THE GIFTS.

"Every good gift and every perfect boon."

1. *Every* good gift and *every* perfect boon. Some commentators draw a distinction between *gift* or *giving* and *boon*, as if the former referred to temporal gifts and the latter to spiritual gifts, but this is unnecessary. Such a distinction was probably not in the mind of the writer. He probably did not draw a hard and fast line between a good gift and a perfect boon, but meant the second term to continue and supplement the first. We may

consider the gifts of God under the two headings "temporal" and "spiritual" gifts, but only because they form convenient divisions, not because we would make an arbitrary distinction between good gifts and perfect boons.

(1) Every temporal blessing, then, comes from God. All the good that comes to us in this life is a gift from above, and we may not consider any of God's gifts as insignificant, whether our daily bread, or our rest at night, any hour of well-being, or week of blessed work, or enjoyment of all that is beautiful in nature and art, or the joys of home, the love of our family and the faithfulness of friends; in short, anything that is treasured by man as a happiness or a blessing.

(2) No one can read Holy Scripture without being struck by the variety of gifts which are bestowed by God. It was He who breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, so that man became a living soul. Wherever we see life—life in the plant, or in the bird that sings to us, or in the little child that is playing in our nurseries—there we see the handiwork of God. He makes men able to seek out curious inventions, and gives us also what is beautiful and wonderful in art. We are told that it was the direct inspiration of God that wrought in the artisans of tabernacle and temple, and made them cunning architects to build houses for God, fragrant with cedar, and beautiful with colour, and bright with ornaments of gold. And that same Spirit who gives us our treasures of art gives also what is beautiful in action. It was He who inspired in David his courage, and who gave to Samson his strength, and filled Gideon with his spirit of patriotism, and gave to Solomon his understanding heart. There are diversities of gifts. To some men God gives the ability to work miracles of healing; to others He gives the power of great inventiveness; to others skill to discover and interpret the secrets of nature; to others eloquence; to others perhaps the best gift of all, the pure and simple heart. But in all these worketh the self-same Spirit of God, dividing to every man severally as He will.

(3) God does not give us only temporal gifts. Man does not live by bread alone, or by art or science, or the culture of his mind, or the successful use of his talents. He does not live either by the happiness of his home, or by honour in the sight of other men. He lives also by the spiritual graces of God.

There is the gift of His Holy Spirit to those who earnestly desire and ask for it, to illumine our minds, to sanctify our hearts, to purify our sinful nature, to work in us Christian graces of disposition. There is the gift of His Holy Word to be the light to our feet, and the lamp to our path—"the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls." There is the gift of regeneration in the waters of Baptism, developed by after gifts of the Spirit into that renewal of our nature by which we become dead unto sin and new creatures in Christ Jesus. Shall we not add the blessing of a changed, converted heart; of an awakened serious mind; of a tender, sensitive conscience? There is the privilege of access to God through Christ in prayer; the blessing of answered prayer. There is the gift of spiritual strength by which we are enabled to resist temptation; of faith by which we overcome the world; of all those various graces which adorn the soul and are the varied developments of God's Spirit.

But God's greatest and most glorious gift is the gift of His beloved and only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. It is only in Christ Jesus that all these heavenly gifts and graces are ours—sins forgiven, hearts renewed, righteousness and adoption, honour and immortality, an inheritance incorruptible, and an eternal weight of glory.

¶ In the prayer-meeting I am expounding the 103rd Psalm. The psalm is a delightful study. Have you ever made a list of the blessings the psalmist praises God for? Just think of it: Forgiveness, soul-healing, redemption, coronation, satisfaction, perpetual youth, justice, revelation, mercy, tenderness, pity, and so on. No wonder when we think of it we need "*all* that is within us" to praise.[1]

2. God sends *only* good gifts. The words of the text were spoken, as the context shows, to refute and rebuke the notion that God may tempt to evil. And they accomplish their object by describing God as One who not only gives all good, but who gives, and from His very nature can give, only good; whose "giving" always and necessarily is solely for good; whose "boons," seeing that they must be like Himself, can have no faults in them. His gifts may be abused, but the abuse is no part of the gifts; the goods He confers may become the occasion of temptations to evil,

[1] *George H. C. Macgregor*, 121.

but as He cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man; in spite of the light from heaven we may stray, but the light from heaven never leads astray. God gives only good, never evil, as the sun gives only light, never darkness.

¶ Is *everything* God gives us *good*? Does He not give us trials, sorrows, separations, sickness, bereavement, death? Are these *good gifts*? Yes, as they came from Him they were "good." If they are bad, it is we who make them bad. They have all a loving intention, and a loving power in them, and they are all to make, if not a present, yet a certain future of greater happiness. I feel sure we shall, one day, place highest among "the good gifts," as the very best gifts we have ever had, our heaviest trials, and our severest losses.[1]

I asked for bread; God gave a stone instead.
Yet, while I pillowed there my weary head,
The angels made a ladder of my dreams,
Which upward to celestial mountains led.
And, when I woke beneath the morning's beams,
Around my resting place fresh manna lay;
And, praising God, I went upon my way.
For I was fed.

God answers prayer; sometimes, when hearts are weak,
He gives the very gifts believers seek.
But often faith must learn a deeper rest,
And trust God's silence when He does not speak;
For He whose name is Love will send the best.
Stars may burn out, nor mountain walls endure,
But God is true, His promises are sure
To those who seek.

II.

The Giver.

"Every good gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."

1. These words plainly state that all good and perfect gifts come from one and the same source—that every good gift and every perfect boon has its origin beyond time, beyond earth and man, beyond all secondary and creaturely causes, in the Eternal

[1] James Vaughan.

Uncreated Divine First Cause—that all physical beauties, all providential bounties, all gracious influences, all that is true, all that is lovely, all that is pure and righteous and holy, all genuine satisfactions, all real blessings, are from the all-perfect and all-loving Father in whom we and all things live and move and have our being. As all rays of sunlight issue from the sun, so all good gifts are bestowed by the one good Giver. The sun in the heavens ever raying forth light and heat, and so beautifying and nourishing all nature, is an emblem of God and His giving; but bright and glorious although it be, it is only a feeble and inadequate emblem. God is all light, pure light; has no darkness or shadow in Himself; can have no darkness or shadow pass over Him; and His light shines, His good and perfect gifts flow forth from Him, without interruption, without cessation.

¶ The rising sun first illumines the loftiest mountain top, and then the light creeps down from the higher to the lower levels, and at last fills all the valleys with its radiance. In some remote primitive parts of Switzerland a man stands at early dawn on a rising ground near his village, and when he sees the highest snowy peak flushing red with the first rays of the sun, he sounds his alpine horn, and all in the neighbourhood who hear it know that a new day has begun, and they prepare to go forth to their labours.[1]

2. "Every man," says Solomon, "is a friend to him that giveth gifts." How then, we may ask, is it that God, the Giver of all good gifts, has not more friends on earth? The reason is that we do not remember God's mercies and are not sufficiently grateful for them. But God does not cease giving because we forget the Giver. He gives as a father to his children.

(1) The "Father of lights" is not too high above the earth to remember His children. It is the good pleasure of the Father to give to His children. He does not bargain with them—so much blessing for so much service. He gives, and gives freely and liberally, all that we need. He is the all-wise and the all-loving God, and therefore He can give only the perfect things—that which is best fitted to make us truly blessed. He does not give capriciously or by partiality, bestowing upon one and withholding from another. He knows the things that we need, and He will

[1] H. Macmillan, *The Gate Beautiful*, 224.

give them to us; not a stone but bread for our hunger, not a serpent but an egg for our feast.

Good tidings every day.
God's messengers ride fast.
We do not hear one half they say,
There is such noise on the highway,
Where we must wait till they ride past.

Their hands throw treasures round
Among the multitude.
No pause, no choice, no count, no bound,
No questioning how men are found,
If they be evil or be good.

And of the multitude,
No man but in his hand
Holds some great gift misunderstood,
Some treasure, for whose use or good
His ignorance sees no demand.

These are the tokens lent
By immortality;
Birth-marks of our divine descent;
Sureties of ultimate intent,
God's gospel of Eternity.[1]

(2) We receive many of our blessings as a matter of course, blessings from a Father's hand, which we have received in the weakness of infancy, throughout our manhood and womanhood; strewn along the path of our more mature life, showered down upon us with unchanging constancy in our old age. What delights the Father is our coming and asking. "Ye receive not," says St. James, "because ye ask not."

¶ Good must be voluntarily accepted. We must make it clear that we want it. There had been ten preparatory days of prayer before the promise of the Pentecost could be fulfilled. And it has invariably been observed that, whenever a great outpouring of spiritual blessing has been experienced, the gift has been preceded by a stirring of strong desire in those who knew the value of prayer.[2]

¶ "When, Sir Walter," said Queen Elizabeth to that gallant knight, Raleigh, who was persistently interceding for offenders,

[1] Saxe Holm. [2] A. W. Robinson, *The Voice of Joy and Health*, 82.

"when will you cease to be a beggar?" "When your Majesty will cease to be a benefactor," was the reply.

3. Everything that is good in the world and humanity, and in the individual soul, everything that is in the truest sense a boon, is a gift of God, and comes down from the perfect source of all goodness, and is a reflection of the "Father of lights." Here, surely, is a message of hope concerning ourselves, and concerning others.

(1) First, *concerning ourselves.*—Until we have abandoned everything that is right and good and true, God has not abandoned us; there is something of His—shall we not indeed say something of Him?—in us, and He has a hold upon us by means of it. Most of us are conscious of the evil that is in us; it is not often that we need to be reminded of it, it is our despair. For that reason we need to be reminded that there is something pure and noble left, and that that is God's gift, the point in our lives at which He touches us; if we would but believe it, that is our assurance that God refuses to let us go. If we realize that God has been constantly at work in us, and is at work in us now, that we are not God-forsaken, we shall be more ready than otherwise we should be to abandon ourselves completely to God's influence and control in the way that He desires. We are not required to summon to our aid one who is a stranger and afar off, who may or may not come at our call, but rather to suffer God, who holds us now in part, to take charge of the whole—to yield our wills and hearts to the Divine promptings within us, and to permit His power to spread over and possess the whole life.

¶ The power to set the heart right, to renew the springs of action, comes from Christ. The sense of the infinite worth of the single soul, and the recoverableness of a man at his worst, are the gifts of Christ.[1]

So thou alone dost walk before
  Thy God with perfect aim,
From Him desiring nothing more
  Beside Himself to claim.

For if thou not to Him aspire,
  But to His gifts alone,
Not Love, but covetous desire,
  Has brought thee to His throne.

[1] *Henry Drummond*, 7.

While such thy prayer, it mounts above
In vain; the golden key
Of God's rich treasure-house of love,
Thine own will never be.[1]

(2) Second, *concerning our fellow-men.*—The gifts received by us from God are received only to be held in trust. It is the mission of us all to bring to souls that are less illumined than our own the light that is in us, and the light that is in them, even though it be but as the faint flicker of a candle, will leap to meet the brighter one which we bring, and by the union of our light and theirs the darkness will be driven away. There is something in each soul to which some messenger from God can appeal, and, appealing, may obtain a response.

The gifts of the good things of this life are given in order that we may "have to give to him that needeth," and unless we share them with others they will eat, as this Apostle tells us, "into our souls as doth a canker." And the gifts of grace are given that we may diffuse them. Have we gifts of knowledge? It is that we may impart that knowledge to others. Have we the gifts of wisdom? It is in order that we may raise all about us to a higher level. They are assuredly given to us that we may let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not.

¶ Therefore, if you let me guide you, go in at this south transept door, and put a sou into every beggar's box who asks it there,—it is none of your business whether they should be there or not, nor whether they deserve to have the sou,—be sure only that you yourself deserve to have it to give; and give it prettily, and not as if it burnt your fingers.[2]

¶ It is incredible, absolutely incredible, that the handful of men who enjoy the richness of God's gifts at a University can be given them merely for themselves. Is it possible to contemplate Cambridge apart from East London, South London, Africa, or the

[1] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 280.

[2] Ruskin, *The Bible of Amiens* (*Works*, xxxiii. 129).

Congo? To a believer in God it is *impossible.* God has no favourites, and there is no way of keeping your belief in an entirely good and loving God, unless He means His reservoirs to overflow, unless He gives to the whole human race, indirectly if not directly, and unless, while He pours His blessings down upon one place, and seems to neglect another, it is only in seeming, because, while He gives to the one, He is really giving, unless we scandalously neglect our duty, also to the other.[1]

[1] A. F. W. Ingram, *Into the Fighting Line*, 229.

The Prayer of a Righteous Man.

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THE PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN.

The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working.—Jas. v. 16.

1. THERE is one writer in the New Testament who strikes us as being very modern. His great characteristic is robust common-sense. He descends from the mountain of theology to deal with very practical matters on the plain of everyday life. The epithet might be applied to him which was applied to Charles Kingsley. He seems to be an "ordained layman." And his name is James.

"You are very orthodox," he says, "and so is the devil. . . . You have heard of a Pentecostal tongue of fire; I will tell you of another—a tongue of fire lit from the pit. Some praise God in a very pious manner, then lose their temper and scold. Some regard themselves as true Christians, and say to their relatives: 'Be comfortable, be warmed and filled,' while they sit down to their dinner alone. Shams, all of them! Let us get to practical matters. You talk of faith. Show me your deeds!"

Speaking of sacred things, he does so in an unconventional manner. He starts congratulating his readers on their difficulties, for although the world has its ups and downs—some poor getting rich, and some rich getting poor—yet with *character* in view as the ultimate possession of a man, he shows that difficulties call forth endurance, and that the power of bearing up under trials is a grand means towards the attainment of a crowned life.

The whole Epistle is anything but the writing of an unpractical dreamer. James is an intensely practical man who "means business." And when he says, "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working," it sounds like an utterance as practical as any of his previous ones.[1]

2. The translation of the text is not easy. In the Authorized

[1] W. A. Cornaby, *In Touch with Reality*, 265.

Version we have it thus: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." This is manifestly tautological, as well as far from literal, for if a prayer is "effectual" of course it "availeth much." Nor is the rendering of the Revised Version, "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working," quite satisfactory. "Supplication" is preferred to "prayer" simply because the Greek word in this verse is different from the word translated prayer in verse 15; it introduces no new meaning. The prayer of which St. James speaks is prayer for others, but "supplication" is not specially applicable to intercessory prayer. The words "in its working," however, are feeble and probably inaccurate. They are feeble, because they stand for one word which, coming at the end of the sentence, is emphatic; and they are probably inaccurate, for it is now accepted by the best scholars (Abbott, Mayor, Armitage Robinson) that the form is *passive*. A literal translation would be: "Of great force is the praying of a righteous man (when it is) energized," or "the energized prayer of a righteous man is of great force."

But what does "energized" mean? Armitage Robinson suggests "set in operation" by Divine agency. "Real prayer," says Rendel Harris, "is connected in a most intimate manner with the influences of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps this is what is meant by the word rendered by us 'energized,' but 'effectual and fervent' in the English Version. Certainly in almost every case where the word occurs it has reference to the operation of God or the devil. And if this be so, the prayer must be a possessed prayer, and the praying man a possessed person, and so again we are brought face to face with the foundations of mighty prayer lying in a holy life. And what else is taught by the Apostle when he says, "The Spirit maketh intercession *in the saints* according to the will of God"?[1]

¶ It is interesting to note that in the early Church those who were "acted or worked on by an evil spirit" bore the name of *Energumeni*.

We have thus three progressive steps—

I. The Force of Prayer.

II. The Force of the Prayer of a Righteous Man.

III. The Force of a Righteous Man's Prayer energized.

[1] J. R. Harris, *Memoranda Sacra*, 119.

I.

The Force of Prayer.

1. It is strange that we understand so little about prayer; with most people, including the greater part of the professedly religious, it is regarded simply as a sort of spiritual safety-valve, adapted to relieve the soul from strain and over-pressure; is any afflicted, they say, let him pray; and as for us, who are merry, we will sing psalms. Now, if we were looking at a steam-engine, and meditating over the motive power of it, we should scarcely direct our thoughts to the safety-valve, or say of it, "What a mighty power is stored up in this little lever." On the contrary, our attention would be fixed on the piston and the steam at the back of it, and on the laws which govern its production, expansion, and condensation. And we need scarcely say that there is not much in common between those who regard prayer simply as an emotional safety-valve, and those who look upon it as one of the great moving forces of the spiritual world. It happens often enough that there are forces in the world of which people generally are ignorant, or of which they have an idea that is totally inadequate. For instance, we have known cynical politicians deride the expression of public opinion, as being valuable only as a political safety-valve, and useful to keep the "many-headed monster," the populace, from more dangerous courses; but not once or twice have they been awakened to find that there is nothing to stand before the rush of a well-formed public sentiment. So that we say rightly public opinion is of great force. And certainly the idea which the majority of folk attach to the word prayer is but very incommensurate to the part which it occupies, not only in the development of the life of the individual soul, but in the life and lot of the world at large.

¶ Not long ago the Principal of a Theological College, who was accustomed to receive University graduates as his students, was asked the question—"What would you most like done for your students while at the Universities? How could they be best prepared while there?" The answer was, "I think the chief thing which they want is to be taught *how to pray*."[1]

[1] W. Lock, *Oxford University Sermons*, 383.

¶ The literature of devotion is amongst the best reading in the world. The study of it brings us in contact with the world's greatest spirits—with Jesus, with Paul, with Augustine, with Francis, with Luther, with Wesley. It is the meeting-ground of opposing creeds, where they fuse, lose their opposition, become one prevailing force. When you are reading Augustine's *Confessions*, or Andrewes' *Devotions*, or Bishop Wilson's *Sacra Privata*, or Methodist William Bramwell's mighty supplications, you forget theological differences; you are in contact with one and the same spiritual energy. To keep on the outer circle of mere fussy activities, while neglecting this innermost force, is like turning a hand-loom and forgetting steam or electricity. In the world of the spiritual, as in that of the physical, to reach the true sphere of power we must go down from the circumference to the innermost centre.[1]

2. Let it be understood clearly that the prayer of which St. James here speaks is intercessory prayer—prayer for others. What is intercession? It is simply "a coming in between"; we know the word well in Roman political history as the tribune's veto. The patricians propose some law that seems likely to injure the people; the tribune *intercedes*; he stands between the people and the threatened danger; and their rights are saved. Again, a great patrician general has become the object of the envy and ill-will of the populace: he is brought to trial: he is in danger of being banished from the country which he has saved. A Tiberius Gracchus *intercedes*, and Scipio Africanus is saved. In its widest sense it may be applied to every act in which one human being is able to come in *between* another and some evil that might befall him. We may extend it even more widely still to the whole principle of mediation, by which one man is used to convey blessings to another.

3. In what ways, then, can intercession be a great force for blessing? Lock suggests three ways.

(1) It is a great force because it compels us to keep up a true ideal of what those for whom we pray may be. It makes us, in George MacDonald's striking phrase, "think of them and God together." If I pray for any one, that implies that I have faith in him, that I believe he may be better than he is. If I pray thoughtfully for any particular blessings for him, then I have

[1] J. Brierley, *Life and the Ideal*, 75.

considered what are the right blessings to ask for him; I must know what God means him to be; my imagination must picture to itself what his true self is, what it can develop into.

(2) Intercession is again a great force, because it pledges us to do the best we can for those for whom we pray. We cannot, for very shame, ask God to help those whom we ourselves are refusing to help when that help lies within our power; the very fact of intercession reminds us of the truth of the dependence of man upon man; we ask God to bless those for whom we care, and again and again He reminds us that His blessings are given through men, and the answer to our prayer is that we are sent on His errand of mercy. Even more than this, the prayer returns into our own bosom; we cannot pray for any one, or for anybody for whom we care, without being driven back to look at our own lives. Do we pray for our parents? At once we feel that one of the greatest blessings that can happen to them is that *we* should be true sons to them. "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."

(3) Intercession is also a great force because it brings into action the power of God; just as the tribune's veto obtained its force from the fact that it was not spoken by him on his own responsibility. It was strong because armed with the strength of law; it was strong, not with the strength of even a Tiberius Gracchus, but with the power of a sacrosanct authority; so our prayers are strong because they have the promise and the power of Christ behind them. Intercession makes God, God's purposes, God's plans, the centre of our thought. This is of the very essence of all prayer; this it is that lifts it above a mere calculated selfishness into an act of faith.

¶ Great as is the admitted mystery of prayer, there can be little doubt that much of its secret lies wrapped in the co-operation of the Divine and human will. In prayer man is "a labourer together with" his God. We have had enough in our day of the shallow evangel of labour, man's gospel preached to man; we have been told till we are weary of hearing it, that "he who works prays"; but let us lift up our hearts high enough to meet a fuller, deeper, richer truth; let us learn that "he who prays works," works even with his God, is humble enough, is bold enough to help Him who upholds all things with the word of His power.[1]

[1] Dora Greenwell, *Essays*, 144.

Oh, pray for me!
My faith is feeble, and my light is dim,
God will uphold us if we look to Him;
He knows our weakness, yea, our Father cares—
Yet, friend, I need thy prayers.

Wilt pray for me?
Life is so difficult, and 'neath its load
We bend and falter on the weary road.
Our Saviour, say'st thou, every sorrow shares?
Yet, friend, I need thy prayers.

Oh, pray for me!
And if thou dost, I think that I shall know
And feel such blessedness as long ago,
When one I lov'd and lost his child did bear
Upon the wings of prayer.

Oh, pray for me!
Thy lamp has been so bright, and burn'd so long,
That thou canst help another soul along
By intercession; yea, our Father hears!
Sends answer to thy prayers.[1]

II.

The Prayer of a Righteous Man.

1. It is the righteous man that understands the force of prayer. The force of prayer has been understood by the really spiritual writers of every school and of all time. They knew that prayer is one of the secrets of life; that he who lives prays, and he who prays lives; that he who prays works, and he who works prays; and so large a part of the spiritual life is comprised in the one word prayer that we find them describing the soul's advance by the character of the prayer which springs from it.

¶ Madame Guyon, in her precious A B C of the spiritual life, introduces her book with the title, *A Short and Easy Method of Prayer*; St. Theresa describes the degrees of the soul's progress as degrees of prayer, styling them Prayer of Quiet, Prayer of Union, and so on; St. John of the Cross names his mystical way as "the Ascent of Mount Carmel," the meaning of which is

[1] Una, *In Life's Garden*, 80.

evidently similar to the other. And so, no doubt one might give other instances, confining ourselves, of course, to the experimental Christians only, and letting the divines and theologians alone. May we not say that our dear Lord Himself was careful enough both in example and in teaching to lead His scholars along this way, making them aware that a great part of the soul's education was education in prayer?[1]

2. What is meant by a righteous man? It means simply a man of right character. Here on earth the influence of one who asks a favour for others depends entirely on his character, and the relationship he bears to him with whom he is interceding. It is what he is that gives weight to what he asks. It is not otherwise with God. Our power in prayer depends upon our life. Where our life is right we shall know how to pray so as to please God, and prayer will secure the answer. The texts quoted above all point in this direction. "*If ye abide in me*," our Lord says, "ye shall ask, and it shall be done unto you." We receive whatsoever we ask, St. John says, *because* we obey and please God. All lack of power to pray aright and perseveringly, all lack of power in prayer with God, points to some lack in the Christian life. It is as we learn to live the life that pleases God that God will give what we ask.

¶ We speak of Abraham as intercessor. What gave him such boldness? He knew that God had chosen and called him away from his home and people to walk before Him, that all nations might be blessed in Him. He knew that he had obeyed, and forsaken all for God. Implicit obedience, to the very sacrifice of his son, was the law of his life. He did what God asked: he dared trust God to do what he asked. We speak of Moses as intercessor. He too had forsaken all for God, "accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." He lived at God's disposal: he "was faithful in all his house, as a servant." How often it is written of him, "According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did he." No wonder that he was very bold: his heart was right with God: he knew God would hear him. No less true is this of Elijah, the man who stood up to plead for the Lord God of Israel. The man who is ready to risk all for God can count upon God to do all for him.[2]

¶ I was reading, recently, an account by Bishop Boyd Vincent

[1] J. R. Harris, *Memoranda Sacra*, 113.

[2] A. Murray, *The Ministry of Intercession*, 59.

of a wonderful revival of religion throughout the whole American continent. It began with a humble lay missionary in New York, who started, in one of their central churches, a prayer-meeting for business men. For a time he was all alone; then half a dozen slowly dropped in. Then others came, and the church was full. And other churches in the city were full. Then others in the State of New York. Then right across the American continent this prayer wave rolled. There were no revivalists or revival machinery, no preaching, no attempt to arouse interest and keep it up. And what was the result? The greatest religious upheaval since the days of Whitefield, and an enormous number of converts.[1]

3. Why is a righteous man's prayer of much force?

(1) *It is in harmony with the will of God.*—Is it not a fact that when the strenuous will-forces of a good man coincide with the mighty will-forces of an all-powerful God, much solid achievement must assuredly follow? We have only to be right with God and to pray with all our might, in order to be as well assured that prayer accomplishes much as that some of the unseen gases in the air build up very solid tons of timber in a growing forest. Logic shows that such prayer should accomplish much, and practice proves that it does.

Since God's will is the ultimate cause of all motion in the material world, we can affect that motion only by co-operating with His will. By our bodily actions we continually thus co-operate with God. And is it *a priori* absurd to suppose that God may also have ordained that our wills should under certain circumstances so co-operate with His will as to affect the regulation of the material world? We are not asked to believe that by our wills, expressed in prayers, we can reverse or change all the laws of nature and make the universe work at random, but that it is part of the laws of nature, the higher laws of nature, that our prayers should sometimes, like our actions, influence the material world by co-operating with God. Thus, we are *not told to pray against God's laws, but according to God's laws,* and then we are asked to believe that the prayers of our spirits in accordance with God's laws may be as effectual as the actions of our bodies.

¶ He offers up a true, prevailing prayer, who, while he prays, keeps his eye ever fixed upon the one great Sacrifice, while he offers up that of his own will, submitted, *slain,* or if not slain, at

[1] G. H. R. Garcia, *Memoir*, 208.

least bound and captive,—a will which, through submission, has become *one* with the will of God. Yes, I would say also that there are eminent sacrifices which God is too merciful to demand of all His children, but to which He *invites* His chosen servants, sacrifices which, but for the strength which God gives, would be impossible, but which, when offered up through His eternal Spirit, even with strong crying and tears, He never fails to bless, to make them fruitful, and to multiply them exceedingly through accepted and *answered* prayers.[1]

¶ Marconi's discovery of wireless telegraphy has already gone beyond the experimental stage, and while we yet speak of it with wonder, all civilized nations accept it as a certainty. We know that he is able to speak wireless telegraph messages from Great Britain or from America across three thousand miles of ocean. Many are beginning to discuss the possibility that his discovery may yet supersede all cables, telephones, and ordinary telegraph by wire. And yet, though this is the greatest wonder for a hundred years, it is, like most of the other wonders, very simple. His instruments set in motion certain waves in that ether which pervades and surrounds our globe. These waves, like the ripples in a pond when a stone is cast into it, spread in every direction, and when they reach any receiver, far or near, tuned to take them, they give their message to it. A receiver not tuned to the proper pitch, however, is useless; the subtle ether waves pass it by to give their message elsewhere. Thus a hundred messages may reach a tuned receiver with absolute certainty, while one wrongly tuned misses them all.[2]

(2) *It is a prayer of faith.*—Doubt weakens the force of prayer as naturally as doubt weakens the power of physical action, and far more effectually. Let a man ask in faith, says St. James, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. An availing prayer must come from the very heart of the utterer, wrung by a sense of right and need; the suppliant must feel that in some way, and that the best way, God will answer his prayer.

¶ Coillard, the missionary of the Zambesi, in a letter to his mother, says: It was at Mamusa that I fell ill, in consequence of the extreme heat and fatigue. My poor wife, who had scarcely recovered herself, had a time of terrible anxiety. Our

[1] Dora Greenwell, *Essays*, 128.

[2] L. A. Banks, *The Great Promises of the Bible*, 36.

people themselves were ill and could not help us much. But the Korannas, good people, won our hearts by their devotion. They live in huts covered with mats and surrounded by a little wall, and when the Christians want to pray and be alone they go on to the veld under some solitary tree, and there pour out their hearts before God. In their language, "to go under the trees" means to go and pray, and that is what they do generally three times a day. How touching it was to see old Mosheue, the chief, come in weeping to comfort Christina, telling her that God would not fail to raise me up, because, since I had fallen sick, all the Christians had been earnestly frequenting their trees. "We were orphans," he said; "we were perishing: how should God deprive us of the bosom that feeds us?" And indeed the Lord did raise me up, and very quickly, thanks and glory to Him.[1]

(3) *It is the prayer of a child to a father.*—The prayer of a righteous man is the expression of the desires of the heart to God, as to a father; whatever may be lawfully desired in His presence may be lawfully prayed for.

¶ It is natural for a father to answer a son's letter, and for a father of wealth to enclose a cheque in his letter, if the son be in a state of honourable need—aye, and even when the son is in difficulties from his mistakes, if the father be a man of ideal generosity. It might be a *special providence* on the part of the father, something beyond his son's stated income; but those who love delight in *specially providing* for those they love. And if the son asked for a boon, not for his own sake, but to vindicate the father's honour, how perfectly natural that the father should rejoice to grant it! The logic of dead mechanical law is nothing to the law of living generous love. And that is the one great fixed law of the universe.[2]

III.

Energized Prayer.

1. Prayer for one another is born of love to one another; and the love which unites us ascends from the one root of life upon which we all are grafted through grace, upon which by virtue of our creation from Adam we all were set. And thus the work of the Holy Spirit in the prayer of intercession will appear in clearest

[1] *Coillard of the Zambesi*, 184.

[2] W. A. Cornaby, *In Touch with Reality*, 282.

light. For with reference to the fellowship of the body of Christ, it is the Father from whom proceeds our redemption, the Son in whom we are united, and the Holy Spirit who imparts to us the conception and consciousness of this unity and holy fellowship. The mere fact of being chosen by the Father and redeemed by the Son does not constrain us to love; it is the act of the Holy Spirit, who, revealing to our conception and consciousness this wonderful gift of grace, opening our eyes to the beauty of being joined to the body of Christ, kindles in us the spark of love for Christ and for His people. And when this double work of the Holy Spirit effectually operates in us, causing our hearts to be drawn to all that belong to us by virtue of our human kinship, and much more strongly to the people of God by virtue of our kinship in the Son, then there awakens in us the love of which the Apostle says that it is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

¶ There is an actual spiritual affinity between the soul which prays with all the fulness of believing love and Him who is Love. This is just the point where our prayers constantly break down, and this is also just the point of contact with the Infinite where those who prevail in prayer reveal such wonderful success. The most powerful dynamo will not impel its electric current along the wire in which there is a flaw which severs the connexion, while on the other hand, a tiny piece of wire will complete the contact and give the electric current free passage. We cannot be in touch with the Infinite Spirit without the cable strands of faith, hope, and love, and the last contains the other two.[1]

2. How will energized prayer be known?

(1) *It will be sympathetic.*—For every prayer of intercession presupposes fellowship with them for whom we pray; a fellowship which casts us into the same distress, and from which we look for deliverance, and that in such a way that the sorrow of one burdens us, and the joy of another causes us to give thanks. Where such vital fellowship does not exist, nor the love which springs from it, or where these are temporarily inactive, there may be a formal intercession of words, but real intercession from the heart there can not be.

¶ It's a strange thing—sometimes when I'm quite alone, sitting in my room with my eyes closed, or walking over the hills, the people I've seen and known, if it's only been for a few days,

[1] C. D. Lampen, *Spiritual Power*, 88.

are brought before me, and I hear their voices and see them look and move almost plainer than I ever did when they were really with me so as I could touch them. And then my heart is drawn out towards them, and I feel their lot as if it were my own, and I take comfort in spreading it before the Lord and resting in His love, on their behalf as well as my own.[1]

(2) *It will be earnest.*—Wherever the Holy Ghost works, there is sure to be earnestness. Energy is the certain sign of a heart acted upon by Divine grace. And we must be energetic for this reason. God very seldom gives anything in this world except to effort.

¶ There are, not far from Bristol, some huge and solid buildings containing a large number of orphans, which buildings have been erected, and which orphans have been supported for many years, at the cost of (say) £1,400,000, by the prayers of one George Müller; a notable instance, which drew forth, at any rate, words of faith from a Chinese ambassador who visited them on a public occasion once. There are also other such solid and tangible instances elsewhere. And I maintain, of course, that real prayer is as great a working force to-day as ever it was.[2]

(3) *It is omnipotent.*—For it is the working of God's will. Sir Oliver Lodge says (*Contemporary Review*, Dec. 1904): "We must realize that the Whole is a single, undeviating, law-saturated Cosmos. But we must also realize that the Whole consists not of matter and motion alone, or even of spirit and will alone, but of both and all; we must even yet further, and enormously, enlarge our conception of what the Whole contains. Not mere energy, but constantly directed energy—the energy which is not (mere) energy . . . but is akin to life and mind. Prayer is part of the orderly Cosmos, and may be an efficient portion of the guiding and controlling will; somewhat as the desire of the inhabitants of a town for civic improvement may be part of the agency which ultimately brings it about, no matter whether the city be representatively or autocratically governed."

¶ Phillips Brooks speaks of "The gracious mercy that binds omnipotence a willing servant to every humble human prayer."[3]

[1] Dinah Morris, in *Adam Bede.*

[2] W. A. Cornaby, *In Touch with Reality*, 273.

[3] *Phillips Brooks*, 80.

¶ George Benfield, a driver on the Midland Railway living at Derby, was standing on the footplate oiling his engine, the train being stationary, when he slipped and fell on the space between the lines. He heard the express coming on, and had only just time to lie full length on the "six-foot" when it rushed by, and he escaped unhurt. He returned to his home in the middle of the night, and as he was going up the stairs, he heard one of his children, a girl about eight years old, crying and sobbing. "Oh, father," she said, "I thought somebody came and told me that you were going to be killed, and I got out of bed and prayed that God would not let you die." Was it only a dream, a coincidence? George Benfield and some others believed that he owed his life to that prayer.[1]

Of the million or two, more or less,
I rule and possess,
One man, for some cause undefined,
Was least to my mind.

I struck him, he grovelled of course—
For, what was his force?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate:
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
As his lot might be worse.

"Were the object less mean, would he stand
At the swing of my hand!
For obscurity helps him and blots
The hole where he squats."
So, I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain! Gold and jewels I threw,
Still he couched there perdue;
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,
Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilth:
Still he kept to his filth.

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, did I press:
Just a son or a mother to seize!
No such booty as these.

[1] Dean Hole, *Then and Now*, 10.

Were it simply a friend to pursue
'Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself!
No: I could not but smile through my chafe:
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
—Through minuteness, to wit.

Then a humour more great took its place
At the thought of his face,
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
The trouble uncouth
'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
To put out of its pain.
And, "no!" I admonished myself,
"Is one mocked by an elf,
Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
The gravamen's in that!
How the lion, who crouches to suit
His back to my foot,
Would admire that I stand in debate!
But the small turns the great
If it vexes you,—that is the thing!
Toad or rat vex the king?
Though I waste half my realm to unearth
Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!"

So, I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake;
Over-head, did my thunder combine
With my underground mine:
Till I looked from my labour content
To enjoy the event.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
Did I say "without friend"?
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across

Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest!
Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
—So, *I* was afraid![1]

[1] Browning, *Instans Tyrannus*.

A Living Hope.

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A Living Hope.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.—1 Pet. i. 3.

There is something strange to our ears at the present day both in what these words say and in the joyful, fearless tone in which they say it. We have been born and bred in the faith that Jesus Christ, who was crucified on Calvary, rose from the dead on the third day. We have also been born and bred in the faith that, when our bodies are shut up in a coffin and buried in a grave in the churchyard, that is not the end of us, but that we shall rise again to a future life. Once more, we have been born and bred in the faith that Christ's rising from the dead at Jerusalem more than eighteen hundred years ago is in some way an assurance of our rising from the dead, and that therefore our hopes of a future life are naturally brought to mind by Easter Day more than by any other day of the year. All this we take rather as a matter of course. But it does not seem to bring us much nearer to St. Peter's state of mind. We are willing perhaps to allow that thanks are due to God for not leaving us to perish utterly with the decay of our present bodies like sheep or cattle; but we find it hard to join quite honestly in so warmly blessing the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for it. We scarcely think of it as mercy, much less as great mercy. We should hardly of our own accord call our own feeling a lively or living hope. Above all, we cannot enter into that very peculiar saying of St. Peter, that God *has begotten us again* to a living hope by His Son's resurrection. It is not hard to understand how our rising from the dead to a better life might be truly called a second birth; and in that case God who will raise us from the dead might well be spoken of as begetting us again. But this is not

what St. Peter says. The new life for which he blesses God is something given to us already: and its great mark is that it is a life of glowing hope.

The subject is our living hope. Take it in three divisions—

I. The Source of our Hope
II. The Means of it.
III. The Nature of it.

I.

The Source of our Living Hope.

Its source, says St. Peter, is the mercy of God. He calls God's mercy "the great (A.V. abundant) mercy"; and he calls God "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And he blesses God for it. So we have here a blessing upon the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ on account of His great mercy.

1. *Blessed.*—There is a distinction maintained in Scripture between "blessed" as applied to God, and "blessed" as applied to men. Although we are obliged to use the same term for both in our language, they are distinct in the Greek. That which is applied to God means to be *pronounced blessed*; that which is applied to men means to be *made blessed.* Christians are blessed in the sense that they receive blessings; God is blessed in the sense that He receives, not blessings, but praises. This formula of praise is applicable only to Him from whom are all things.

2. *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*—Of all the aspects and attributes of the great God, that which first leaps to the lips of this Apostle is, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." How real and vivid was spiritual life in those primitive Christians. Faith really dominated. Farm and merchandise receded into the background, and the relations of the soul with God and eternity bounded to the front. And mark how St. Peter finds it possible to draw near to God: he takes refuge in the Mediator. When he sees God as the giver of the unspeakable Gift, he comes forward with boldness. In point of fact, unless we recognize Him in that character, we cannot relish Him in any. "How shall he not also

with him freely give us all things?" These men were skilful. They knew where consolation lay; they grasped God by His title of Father of our Lord Jesus, and were enabled to cling in fond confidence as dear children.

¶ A father is one who, because of love, chooses to give of himself, of his own life, that there may be another one, made in his own image, with whom he may have fellowship in spirit, and partnership in service. And whatever some of our scholarly friends may do with the simple Genesis story of creation, it is impossible to get away from this, that its direct purpose was to let us know that God really fathered man. He was moved by love. He chose to have us made. He gave of His own life that we might come into life; and yet more, that we might come into His own sort of life, life like His, and that we should be in His own likeness in our life.

And if there be any doubt at all about this it disappears entirely as we stand on the foot of the hill of the Cross. A father gives of his life at the first that his child may come into life; then he gives constantly that his child may grow into fulness of matured life. And in any emergency that may arise he unhesitatingly gives of his life again, to the extreme of giving it out, that his child may be saved from death.

It was Jesus who taught us to call God Father. The word was used before, but it was used very little. He taught us the blessed habit of using that word for God. But He did infinitely more than teach us the use of a word, even of that great word. He acted the father part for God on Calvary.[1]

3. *According to His great mercy.*—It is manifest that this living hope can only be of Divine bestowment; it is at once too lofty and too lasting to come from meaner hands. And it *is* the gift of God to those who receive the Gospel of His Son. Faith in Christ produces it, and in proportion to the intensity of the faith does the hope increase and brighten. Now we must never forget that, like every other spiritual blessing, it is "not of debt, but of grace." It is not of our prescriptive or unforfeited right, but "according to His great mercy." None of those who have realized the hope will deny that its source is the mercy of God. Their conception of sin is too deep, they are too enlightened upon the magnitude of their deliverance, to hesitate upon the matter for a moment. The brow of the sceptical may darken, and the pride of

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 140.

the carnal may rebel; but if you interrogate the godly, you will find that his will is submissive, and his heart is full. The penitent, who has but recently believed, who yet shudders as if he felt the sliding earth—"a blasphemer, a persecutor, injurious" —tells you, amid grateful tears, "but I obtained mercy." The white-haired saint, as, just ready to depart, he surveys from the Nebo-summit the whole path of his difficult climbing, gasps out his latest testimony, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." The blessed ones, whose long experience of the golden streets has made them at home in heaven, fling down upon us without ceasing the melody of the same eternal song:—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

¶ The great question that presses upon the human mind, from age to age, is the inquiry: Is God a merciful Being, and will He show mercy? Living as we do under the light of Revelation, we know little of the doubts and fears that spontaneously rise in the guilty human soul when it is left solely to the light of nature to answer it. With the Bible in our hands, and hearing the good news of redemption from our earliest years, it seems a matter of course that the Deity should pardon sin. Nay, a certain class of men in Christendom seem to have come to the opinion that it is more difficult to prove that God is just than to prove that He is merciful. But this is not the thought and feeling of man when outside of the pale of Revelation. Go into the ancient pagan world, examine the theologizing of the Greek and Roman mind, and you will discover that the fears of the justice far outnumbered the hopes of the mercy; that Plato and Plutarch and Cicero and Tacitus were far more certain that God would punish sin, than that He would pardon it. This is the reason that there is no light, or joy, in any of the pagan religions. Except when religion was converted into the worship of Beauty, as in the instance of the later Greek, and all the solemn and truthful ideas of law and justice were eliminated from it, every one of the natural religions of the globe is filled with sombre and gloomy hues, and no others. The truest and best religions of the ancient world were always the sternest and saddest, because the unaided human mind is certain that God is just, but is not certain that He is merciful. When man is outside of Revelation, it is by no means a matter of course that God is clement, and that sin shall be forgiven. Great uncertainty overhangs the doctrine of the Divine mercy, from the position of natural religion, and it is only within the province of revealed truth that the uncertainty is removed. Apart from a distinct and direct *promise* from the

lips of God Himself that He will forgive sin, no human creature can be sure that sin will ever be forgiven.[1]

II.

The Means of our Living Hope.

It is by means of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that we obtain our living hope. But we are said not simply to obtain it but to be "begotten again" to it.

1. *We are begotten again to a living hope.*—These words speak of a change which can be described only in language to which nothing in human experience can possibly answer. There is no such thing in nature as being begotten again, as a new and second birth. That word "regeneration," which from Scripture and the Church has passed into the common phraseology of historical and political speculation, involves in its proper meaning an impossible conception—the conception of life once begun, beginning again; and it is no wonder that Nicodemus, with his thoughts moulded and limited by experience and custom, stumbled at it. But nothing less than this strange and violent word would suffice to express the change which the Incarnation of the Eternal Son was to work in the souls of men. And no less a word will suffice for the Apostle, to express the change made in the condition and prospects of God's chosen by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Here, as in so many other cases, we are not startled, we are not struck, from the long effect of use and habit. These amazing words of Scripture we have heard all our life long; the language in which Prophets and Apostles set forth the wonderful works of God has been before our minds—minds often inattentive, often wandering, and anyhow seldom adequately alive to its full import. In God's great goodness, these words have been made to us "current coin"; but, as in current coin, the sharpness and freshness of their first impress has been worn away by long familiarity, by the sin and the misuse of centuries, by the irreverence and unfaithfulness of human custom. If we could be carried back to the days when they were written—if we could hear or read an Epistle of St. Paul or St. Peter, as its words fell for the first time

[1] W. G. T. Shedd, *Sermons to the Natural Man*, 359.

or the second on the ears of those to whom it was originally written, and who were living in the midst of the things and events to which it referred—language which we now listen to with so languid an interest would take our minds captive with astonishment; what seems so trite, so tame, so vague, would start in every syllable into life and definite meaning and overpowering surprise; we should feel that we were hearing or reading of things never yet spoken of by the tongues of men, or of thoughts too mighty even for inspired minds.

The language is indeed astonishing, but not more astonishing than that which it represents. That which had come to pass in this world of ours when Jesus Christ died on the Cross and rose from the dead on the third day—that change of all beliefs, all suppositions, all hopes, all motives—that great change required a new outfit of words for its expression. To those who could not break with what they had been accustomed to, who could not imagine it possible that the Son of God could die for men, that any breathing mortal breath could come back from the grave, the new language was simply unintelligible—"unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness." But to those who *did* believe it, even the loftiest and most startling language must have seemed too weak: nothing but that sustained tone of expression, raised to its highest power and boldest strain, which prevails without exception throughout the Epistles of the New Testament, could in any degree correspond to what had now become the supreme realities of men's existence. To speak of a "new creation," to speak of "death being swallowed up in victory," of "life and immortality" being "brought to light," of men being "born again" into the sonship, and household, and inheritance of God—all this to them was no extravagance of Eastern rhetoric, but the plain "words of truth and soberness." Such a change as had been in the order of things here, when Christ died and rose again, more than authorized it. How could such things happen, and all things not be made new? The anomaly would have been that men should have seen and should believe such wonders, and yet should speak only in the language to which the world had been accustomed before such things had happened.

¶ The word is peculiar to St. Peter; it is repeated in ver. 23: "*Being born again*, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,

by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." In another form it occurs 1 Peter ii. 2: "As *newborn* babes, desire the sincere milk of the word" (cf. Luke x. 21). Perhaps St. Peter was not present when our Lord discussed the new birth with Nicodemus. He certainly was present on a later occasion described in St. Mark ix. 33: "And Jesus came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." "The house" in Capernaum was probably Peter's house; and the child, if not probably, at least very possibly, Peter's child. The lesson of child-like simplicity inculcated both here and in the following chapter of St. Mark, where we read of Jesus blessing the infants and saying, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein," was not lost upon St. Peter. It bears fruit in this letter of his old age.[1]

¶ This is one of the unique phrases of the Christian vocabulary. It is not to be found in systems of thought which are alien from the Christian religion. It is not to be found in the vocabulary of any of the modern schools which are severed from the facts and forces of the Christian faith. The emphasis of their teaching gathers round about terms of quite a different order, such as culture, training, discipline, education, evolution. The Christian religion has also much to say about the process of evolution. It dwells at length upon the ministries of "growth," "training," "increasing," "putting on," "perfecting." But while it emphasizes "growth," it directs our attention to "birth." While it magnifies the necessity of wise culture, it proclaims the necessity of good seed. So while the Bible lags behind no school in urging the importance of liberal culture, it stands alone in proclaiming the necessity of right germs. You cannot by culture develop the thorn-bush into a laden vine. You cannot by the most exquisite discipline evolve the "natural" man into the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." If we had to do merely with perverted growths, then the trainer and pruner might twist the crooked straight. But we are confronted with more than perverted

[1] H. A. Birks, *Studies in the Life and Character of St. Peter*, 226.

growths, we have to do with the corrupt and rotting seed. And so the Christian religion raises the previous question. It begins its ministry at a stage prior to the process of evolution. It discourses on births and generations, on seeds and germs, and proclaims as its primary postulate, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now, man is not enamoured of that dogmatic postulate. It smites his pride in the forehead. It lays himself and his counsels in the dust. It expresses itself in an alien speech. Men are familiar with the word "educate," the alien word is "regenerate." Political controversy has familiarized them with the word "reform," the alien word is "transfigure." They have made a commonplace of the word "organize," the alien word is "vitalize." They have made almost a fetish of the phrase "moral growth," the alien word is "new birth."[1]

2. *By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*—The resurrection of Jesus Christ stands in the forefront of all St. Peter's preaching in the Acts. It stands in the forefront of his Epistle here. No one had richer experience of the abundant mercy of God upon the Resurrection Day than St. Peter himself and no one more needed a birth and quickening to new hope upon that day. Hope that had died living again through the resurrection of Christ exactly illustrates his own experience.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the closing and culminating act of the redemption that He wrought. If the work had not thereby been completed, it would have been of no avail. The Spirit, through St. Paul, has clearly borne witness that unless the Redeemer's work had been crowned by His resurrection, our hopes would have been vain (1 Cor. xv. 17). The meaning is, that the completed work of Christ saves His people from sin, and gives them a right to the eternal inheritance. Those who are born again rise with Him into resurrection life. The life that they now live in the flesh, they live by the faith of the Son of God. Earth becomes to these heirs the vestibule of heaven.

¶ The writers of the New Testament believed that Christ was the Firstborn from the dead; and we see how this altered the whole face of the world and life. It enlarged almost infinitely the interest even of this present mortal life on earth by giving it a meaning and a future; but it transferred the scene of man's

[1] J. H. Jowett.

true and free perfect existence to a sphere far beyond this, far beyond the swift passage of the seventy years with their weakness and sorrow, far beyond that transitory but laborious stage, when every day, as it came and went, brought its trial, its temptation, its choice, perhaps its fall—to the sphere where all was eternal and all was accomplished. And it did this, it opened this great moral hope, as never had been done before; not for the great and elect souls of the race only, but for the obscure and down-trodden crowds, the multitudes that none can number—the slave, the lost, the abject, the miserable. For in His own person, Son of God and Son of Man, He had made the step from old things to new; and He had made it for all His brethren.[1]

O'er the dead King low in the dust
No ray supernal gleams;
While hope in hearts by sorrow crushed
Dies with the waning beams.

The third day dawns; hush! 'tis the beat
Of quiv'ring angel-wings;
And hark! a strain, glad, clear, and sweet
High through the welkin rings.

"Hail! Victor, hail! through direful strife
The Grave, Death, Hell o'ercome;
Crowned with the might of Risen Life
To draw Thy wand'rers home."

A wand'rer I, oh! living Lord;
I come, I cling to Thee;
My Brother loved, my God adored,
Life, Rest and Home for me.

III.

The Nature of our Hope.

1. It is called "a living hope." In what sense is it living?

(1) *It is the hope of a living man.*—A dead man cannot think, cannot wish, cannot hope, neither can a man spiritually dead possess the Christian's living hope. The carnal man minds earthly things, is more or less absorbed in them; and to be

[1] R. W. Church, *Cathedral and University Sermons*, 135.

carnally minded is death. In the mind of such a man this hope cannot bud and blossom, cannot, indeed, exist unless it be in a delusive form. They are opposites and cannot be brought into conjunction or companionship without a radical change in the man's nature. The Apostle, reminding the Ephesians of their carnal state, says, "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, *having no hope.*" There must be a change, therefore, from the carnal to the spiritual state before this hope can be planted in the soul, before a man can truly say, "The Christian's hope is my possession. I have it! It is *mine*!"

¶ There is in Scotland an old castle, where far below the ground level was discovered, some time ago, a dark and noisome dungeon. No sunbeam could find its way into its pestilential depths. The very air was laden with damp and disease, and when the workmen, letting in the light, made their way into the dungeon, they found on the wall, scratched by some miserable wretch who had met his doom there, the pitiful words, "No hope. No hope."[1]

¶ It has been well said: "Death and death alone is what we must consult about life; and not some vague future or survival, in which we shall not be present. It is our own end; and everything happens in the interval between death and now. Do not talk to me of those imaginary prolongations which wield over us the childish spell of number: do not talk to me—to me who am to die outright—of societies and peoples! There is no reality, there is no true duration, save that between the cradle and the grave. The rest is mere bombast, show, delusion! They call me a master because of some magic in my speech and thoughts; but I am a frightened child in the presence of death!"

That is where we stand. For us death is the one event that counts in our life and in our universe. It is the point whereat all that escapes our vigilance unites and conspires against our happiness. The more our thoughts struggle to turn away from it, the closer do they press around it. The more we dread it, the more dreadful it becomes, for it battens but on our fears.[2]

(2) *It centres in a living Christ.*—We are begotten to it—how? "By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Our hope is rooted in the resurrection—that is, centred in Christ, not only because He once died for the sinner's guilt, but because He is now

[1] *Quintin Hogg*, 396. [2] M. Maeterlinck, *Death*, 1.

alive for evermore, our Advocate with the Father, our great High Priest as well as our Sacrifice. If the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not theologically one, practically they are. They are interlocked. They are conjoined. You cannot divorce them without destroying their redemptive worth. Without the resurrection the efficacious death would be of no avail redemptively. Hence the Apostles speak of Jesus Christ as "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification"; "who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead . . . that your faith and hope might be in God." "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" There is a bold, defiant challenge for you! How dare even an Apostle give utterance to it? Here is his reason, "It is Christ that died, *yea, rather, that is risen again*!"

¶ It has often been a subject of wonder in modern thought that Christianity should rest the hopes of the human race so greatly on the concrete instance of Christ's resurrection rather than on the general inference of the heart and of the reason. But still, as a matter of history, this concrete, particular resurrection has brought about a belief which the inference of universal reason failed to produce. Mankind has manifested a profound capacity for being influenced by concrete instances rather than by abstract speculations. It seems difficult to deny that our Lord's own argument for the continued existence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of the dead in general, on the ground of the immortality of Him with whom they were spiritually united, has been less understood down the centuries, and far less influential in deepening the hopes of the human race, than the particular fact that He Himself rose again the third day from the dead. It is of small value to indicate by what means we should prefer the deepest convictions of humanity to have been developed. The fact remains that faith in immortality has been created and intensified by the concrete resurrection of Christ as it has been by nothing else in the world. Of course, not by that resurrection apart from the personality in that resurrection, and from all that the Divine Personality involved. It has been the fact together with its significance. Still it has been the fact rather than abstract considerations. Reason and heart, apart from Christ's resurrection, have faltered and often failed. Where they have proved inconclusive or ineffective the triumphant morning in Joseph's garden has determined the conviction and hopes of

millions. Once more, let it be repeated that it is belief in the literal physical resurrection which has immensely strengthened and confirmed men's hope in immortality. It was not in the least that as men looked on Jesus' grave their instincts told them that such human goodness had only been transplanted and must flourish elsewhere. It was not a mere faith that the good cannot really die. It was literally the reappearance in human form of Him who was dead and is alive again which wrought this mighty advancement in the hopes of the human race. . . . It is because we are persuaded that a Person literally Divine has already immortalized our human nature in the precincts of light that we are also persuaded of our own immortality.[1]

While Christ lay dead the widowed world
  Wore willow green for hope undone:
Till, when bright Easter dews impearled
  The chilly burial earth,
All north and south, all east and west,
  Flushed rosy in the arising sun;
Hope laughed, and Faith resumed her rest,
  And Love remembered mirth.[2]

(3) *It is contrasted with hopes that are dead.*—Many once-fondly cherished hopes are to be found withered and strewn on life's pathway. How many a man has "made gold his hope, and said to fine gold thou art my confidence," and has "rejoiced because his hand had gotten much," who found out when too late that he had been building his life on a foundation of sand. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" How many have made pleasure their hope, who, when they had squandered all their life and soul forces, found that "the world passeth away and the lust thereof"—the power to enjoy. How many have made ambition their hope, who have found out what a poor pillow popularity makes for a dying head, what a wretched salve for a smiting conscience, and how empty it is, too, when its highest pinnacle is reached. "The expectation of the wicked shall perish." "Their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost." "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" But "blessed is the man . . . whose hope the Lord is!" It is a living hope. It shall never

[1] W. J. S. Simpson, *Our Lord's Resurrection*, 277.
[2] C. G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 168.

perish, for God has pledged its realization under the seal of His own *oath*. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

¶ Dead hopes are like dead children, beautiful, it may be, even in death, but how sad and heart-breaking to look upon. Every one, as he passes through the pilgrimage of life, has to leave behind him dead hopes which he buried with tears; the fortune which he was going to win, and which failed; the ambition which he was going to realize, and which eludes his grasp; the human love which was going to be his possession for life, and which deserts or betrays him; the child, that was going to be the strength and joy of his old age, and that death snatches from him.[1]

2. But besides being a living hope in these special ways, the hope to which we are begotten by the Resurrection has three characteristics.

(1) *It is a hope that recognizes the presence of God in Christ.*—Who among the most favoured of Prophets could have raised their souls to the hope that the day would come when God should be made known to men, as God *was* made known in the Person of Jesus Christ—that what their prophetic words signified was such a manifestation of God to man as the Gospels record? Who among them could have imagined that He who came and disclosed to men that mystery and nature of the Godhead which had been veiled to Moses and Isaiah, was to abide with those whom He had redeemed, till He returned to judge the world? And yet this is the "living hope" to which the successive generations of Christian people are heirs, by virtue of that great change in their condition made by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

¶ "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself," was the awe-struck reflection of the Prophet, even while recounting the power and providence of the "God of Israel, the Saviour"; and nature and conscience, His witnesses throughout all the earth, yet echoed the confession—"A God that hideth Himself." This

[1] J. G. Greenhough, *Christian Festivals and Anniversaries*, 77.

hidden God made known, made certain, this was what man sought after—this was the "Desire of all nations." And this was given. God came forth from the depths and uncertainties of nature, from the clouds and terrors and enigmas of Providence, from the veil and mystery behind which Israel worshipped Him, from the silence in which He was yet the dim hope of all the ends of the earth—He came forth and showed Himself, He came forth and gave Himself to the love and hearts of men. He taught with human words; He healed, He forgave, He blessed; He drew souls to Himself with new and Divine affections; *with* men and *for* men, He passed from this life through that dark gate of fear and humiliation which we call Death. And if this had been all—if He had passed at once from the grave which could not hold Him to His glory above—who among us knows enough to dare to ask why He should have stopped at this, why He should have vouchsafed no more, whether with only so much His promise could have been fulfilled and His work accomplished? But this, as we know, was not all. On earth itself He was again, alive from the dead. On earth again, as He had been before, and yet *not* as He had been before: passing across the scene of life, yet no longer mortal—conversing, walking, eating with men, but vanishing the next moment from their sight; in form, in love, in power the same, but no longer bound by the body of humiliation which He had worn with His brethren; lifting their thoughts above all that is natural, carnal, earthly in the body, fixing them on all in it that is real and personal. And this was the beginning of a Presence of God which was nevermore to be withdrawn from the sons of men.[1]

(2) *It is a hope that assures us of the triumph of righteousness in the earth.*—Everywhere, the Apostles saw men "rise on stepping stones of their dead selves" to higher things, to a new life, lifted out of the grave of an unholy career into a noble and saintly manhood. How was it accomplished? It was due, not to the memory of a dead hero, worshipped and idealized, but to the vivifying power, the transfiguring energies of the ever-living Christ, with whom by faith they were united.

¶ Now an old man, I dream dreams of great hope, when I plead with those who will carry forward what my own generation has left unattempted or unaccomplished to welcome the ideal which breaks in light upon them, the only possible ideal for man, even the fullest realization of self, the completest service of others,

[1] R. W. Church, *Pascal and other Sermons*, 193.

the devoutest fellowship with God: to strive towards it untiringly even if it seems "to fade for ever and for ever as we move." The world is ruled by great ideals; the soul responds to them. If they are neglected or forgotten they reassert themselves, and in this sense truth prevails at last. Without an ideal there can be no continuity in life; with it even failures become lessons. To a "surrendered soul" there can be no discouragement; for, as we have been truly told, "discouragement is the disenchantment of egoism." But we are God's ministers; and the highest which we can imagine for men, for nations, for humanity falls short of God's will for His creatures, and of the resources which He offers to us for its accomplishment.[1]

(3) *It is the hope of a life to come.*—Man needs a hope resting on something beyond this scene of sense and time. And God has given him one, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our Lord indeed taught, in the plainest language, the reality of a future life. "In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you." "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him."

Passages of this kind from among the very words of Christ might be multiplied: but in teaching that man would live after death, our Lord was teaching only what, with various degrees of distinctness, pagans and Jews had taught before Him. He contributed to the establishment of this truth in the deepest convictions of men, not merely many lessons taught in words, but a fact, palpable to the senses. When, after saying that He would rise from the grave, He rose, He broke the spell of the law of death. He made it plain, within the precincts of the visible world, that a world unseen and eternal awaits us hereafter. His Resurrection converted hopes, surmises, speculations, trains of inference, into strong certainties. "Because I live ye shall live also" was a saying which faith, under the guidance of reason, would henceforth inscribe upon Christ's empty grave. For that He had risen was not a secret whispered to a few; it was verified by the senses of five hundred witnesses; and, in face of a

[1] Westcott, *Lessons from Work*, 300.

jealous and implacable criticism which would fain have silenced its eloquent protestation, established the fact that there is a world beyond the grave, in which Christ is King.

¶ In a Scottish valley, beside a little brook, where there was no kindly soil, a Highlander once planted a tree. Of course it wilted and drooped. But suddenly, to the surprise of every one, it took a new start in life, and bore rich fruit. What was the source of its new life? That was the query put by all who knew it. An examination revealed the secret. With a marvellous vegetable instinct it sent out a shoot which ran along and over a narrow sheep bridge and rooted itself in the rich loam on the other side of the brook. From this rich loam it drew its new life. Even so, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ bridges the River of Death that flows between earth and Heaven.[1]

Sweet Hope is soveraigne comfort of our life:
Our joy in sorrow and our peace in strife;
The dame of beggars and the queene of kings:
Can these delight in height of prosperous things
Without expecting still to keep them sure?
Can those the weight of heavy wants endure
Unless persuasion instant paine allay,
Reserving spirit for a better day?
Our God, who planted in His creature's breast
This stop, on which the wheeles of passion rest,
Hath rays'd, by beames of His abundant grace,
This strong affection to a higher place.
It is the second vertue which attends
That soule whose motion to His sight ascends.
Rest here, my mind, thou shalt no longer stay
To gaze upon these houses made with clay:
Thou shalt not stoope to honours or to lands,
Nor golden balles, where sliding fortune stands;
If no false colours draw thy steps amisse,
Thou hast a palace of eternal blisse,
A paradise from care and feare exempt,
An object worthy of the best attempt.
Who would not for so rich a country fight?
Who would not runne that sees a goal so bright?
O Thou, Who art our Author and our End,
On whose large mercy chains of hope depend;
Lift me to Thee by Thy propitious hand,
For lower I can find no place to stand.[2]

[1] David Gregg, in *The Treasury*, July 1899, p. 248. [2] Sir John Beaumont.

(4) *It is a hope that glorifies death.*—The Resurrection does not merely proclaim immortality. It declares likewise that death leads to life. It assures us that death is the portal to eternity. Thus it glorifies death; it crowns and consecrates the grave. What is the message of the Risen Christ—the Alpha and Omega—to His Churches? Not merely "I am he that liveth." This was a great fact, but this was not all. Read on. "I am he that liveth, and I was dead." Death issuing in life—death the seed, and life the plant and blossom and fruit—this is the great lesson of the Gospel. "I was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

¶ There is no part of the history of Jesus which is either unimportant in itself or uninteresting to those whom He shed His heart's blood to redeem. Matters which are seemingly trivial have couched in them a grave significance, and bear directly and impressively upon the great purpose for which He came into the world. And yet—save that death which is the foundation of our hopes of life—there is no spot more hallowed to the affections of the believer, more sacred to his pilgrim feet, than the garden in which there was a sepulchre, where, amid the flowers of the opening spring, the body of Jesus was laid. Oh! surely the heart will kindle, as we visit it, with thoughts of triumph, not of terror, for it speaks to us of a destroyed destroyer—of a mighty despotism shattered for ever—of a deliverer, whose victory were not complete unless a rejoicing people share it.

Lift up thine eyes to seek the invisible:
  Stir up thy heart to choose the still unseen:
  Strain up thy hope in glad perpetual green
To scale the exceeding height where all saints dwell.
Saints, is it well with you?—Yea, it is well.—
  Where they have reaped, by faith kneel thou to glean:
  Because they stooped so low to reap, they lean
Now over golden harps unspeakable.—
But thou purblind and deafened, knowest thou
  Those glorious beauties unexperienced
  By ear or eye or by heart hitherto?—
I know whom I have trusted: wherefore now
  All amiable, accessible tho' fenced,
  Golden Jerusalem floats full in view.[1]

[1] C. G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 209.

Love and Joy in Believing.

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Love and Joy in Believing.

Whom not having seen, ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—1 Pet. i. 8.

In the preceding verses the Apostle has been speaking of the exceeding joy of primitive Christians in the midst of all their bodily trials and worldly privations. Driven from home, robbed of their substance, injured in person and reputation, they yet greatly rejoiced. What, then, was the secret source of their joy, their invisible support in affliction? The Apostle answers in the words of our text: "Whom not having seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Jesus Christ—their faith in Him and love to Him—accounts for this phenomenon of exquisite joy in Christian experience, a phenomenon so strange that it baffles philosophy, not only to produce it, but even to explain it.

I.

Love to the Unseen Christ.

1. *Love to Christ is independent of sight.*—The Christian's love to Christ is of necessity spiritual. The eye that sees Jesus is the mind's, and the heart that loves Him is the mind's too. The sight is spiritual and the affection also. The love may lack the passion and intensity of instinct, but it has the calmness and the power of spirit. The claims of Christ have appealed not to eye and ear, but to heart and mind. We love Him, not for His beautiful face, or fine voice, or winsome ways, but for His mercy and grace, the righteousness and truth that blend so perfectly in His character. We love Him, not so much for what He did, as for what He is. Gratitude for salvation may be the first, but is never the final

form of Christian love. He who loves his deliverer simply as a deliverer loves for the lowest of all reasons, merely because he has been rescued. But he who loves his Saviour for what that Saviour is, loves Him for the highest of all reasons, because He is Supreme Love, perfect Grace and Truth.

¶ How can the bodily absence of the Lord be for the benefit of His people? He Himself tells us. He must go, to send the Spirit. This fact touches the heart of the whole question. We can know Christ, trust Christ, love Christ, only as we are taught by the Spirit. Christ is a Spirit, to be worshipped in spirit and in truth; Christ in His whole Person and work is the great God infinite and eternal, transcending, therefore, the grasp not merely of all bodily senses, but also of all human reason. And it is as thus transcending the comprehension of nature that He presents Himself to be known, to be trusted, to be loved, to be gloried in by the soul.[1]

¶ Consider this strange fact: the Gospels give no hint as to Christ's personal appearance, the colour of His eyes or hair, the cast of His features, the form of His head, the fashion of His body. Christ, as to physique, is to us an absolutely unknown being; but as to spirit, He is the best known of all beings. While physical descriptions help us to understand other persons, they would mar our conception of Him. In ordinary cases a good portrait is better than a big biography. How much better do we understand Dante, when we study his sad yet severe, worn yet ethereal face, with its keen, clear-cut features, yet look as of infinite remoteness from the world men most realize; or Luther, when we examine the lines of his heavy and broad, yet massive and mighty countenance, so full of laughter or tears, the loud indignation of the controversialist, and the inflexible resolution that could stand solitary against the world; or Oliver Cromwell, in whose large eyes, seamed brow, cheek furrowed and warty, and strong mouth the mystic and soldier, the man of iron will and silent counsel stands expressed. But so little has the outer man to do with Christ, so little is the face capable of expressing what was within, so impossible is it to human flesh or form to reveal the grace and truth that were in Him, that we should feel a description or a portrait an injury to our faith, a deprivation to our spiritual ideal.[2]

¶ An old divine said that he wished he could have seen three things—Rome in her glory; St. Paul preaching at Athens; and Christ in the body. And it was because of their desire to satisfy

[1] J. Hamilton, *Faith in God*, 235. [2] A. M. Fairbairn, *The City of God*, 346.

themselves, and to meet this great longing, that the great painters of Christendom covered the walls of picture galleries with conceptions of the face of Jesus. Crowds have stood transfixed and touched before these masterpieces of art. But who has not turned from the very noblest of them with a sigh of dissatisfaction, and a secret conviction that even if the sublimest feature were to be taken out of each separate picture and all combined into one, the face so composed must still fall infinitely short of that in which Deity and humanity met, and shone, and wept, and loved. We shall never see anything worthy of that face till we see Him as He is.[1]

2. *It is no hardship to have an invisible Saviour.*—We can love Him the better that He is unseen. Sight assists the affection that is akin to instinct, but not that which lives in the spirit. That which the eye sees and the hand handles is commonplace and gross, loses in ethereality by what it gains in visibility. Were God localized, He would seem to our thought much less awful and majestic than when He is conceived as everywhere, like the air we breathe, the element in which all beings live. If there were only one spot on earth where God and my heart could stand face to face, God would seem to my heart much less Divine than He does now, when I can meet Him anywhere, speak to Him anywhere, just as my soul has need. So a Jesus visible to the eye, tangible to the touch, would be a Jesus too limited and gross to be the object of a universal and spiritual affection—a Jesus known to the senses rather than to the soul. And so, while God gave us an historical Christ on whom our faith could rest, He made the history but a moment in the heart of His invisible and eternal being, that we might be compelled to love Him, if we loved Him at all, in spirit and in truth.

¶ There attaches a transcendent character to the soul's true love of the Lord. A beauty which we can see with our bodily eye,—a worth and excellence which we can measure off by the standard of our own being or observation,—all earthly and all finite grandeur,—utterly fail to touch the depths of a renewed heart, or to fill the large longings of the soul's love. Unless the soul finds the Lord in His gifts, it soon sucks out the sweetness from the blossom of all created beauty, and turns away from the crushed and withered leaves with discontented yearnings after something higher and better. All the noblest and tenderest of merely human loves retain their strength only so long as they

[1] F. B. Meyer, *Tried by Fire*, 39.

preserve some natural semblance of Divine and infinite mystery. The passionate and exulting fondness of the mother for her babe, of the boy for his parent, of the young bridegroom for his bride, is drawn forth, not by the actual realities of its objects, but by the imagination of all conceivable and all inconceivable excellences, which floats before the soul in unformed and untried vagueness. When the natural heart loves its grandest and its best, it loves but its own dream. The love of the spiritual mind, however, finds the beauty and the worth of its Beloved greater and ever greater as it gazes on Him with fixed, fond look—greater than anything the eye hath seen or the heart conceived. To the Christian's love for Jesus necessarily belongs that character of transcendency and mystery which so essentially belongs to true love.[1]

II.

Joy in the Unseen Christ.

"In whom," with all the disabilities and pains and absence, "yet believing," you can put out a long arm of faith across the gulf that lies, not only between to-day and nineteen centuries ago, but the deeper and more impassable gulf that lies between earth and heaven, and clasp Christ with a really firm grasp, which will fill the hand, and which we shall feel has laid hold of something, or rather has laid hold of a living person and a loving heart. That is faith. The Apostle uses a very strong form of expression here, which is only very partially represented by our English version. He does not say only "*in* whom believing," but "*towards* whom"; putting emphasis upon the effort and direction of the faith, rather than upon the repose of the heart when it has found its object and rests upon Him. And so the conception of the true Christian attitude is that of a continual outgoing of trust and its child love; of desire and its child possession; and of expectation and its child fruition towards that unseen Christ.

¶ It is much to believe Christ, it is more to believe *in* Him; it is—I was going to say—most of all to believe *towards* Him. For in this region, quite as much as, and I think more than, in the one to which the saying was originally applied, "search is better than attainment." Our condition must always be that of "forgetting the things that are behind"; and however much we may realize the union with the unseen Christ in the act of resting

[1] J. Hamilton, *Faith in God*, 237.

upon Him, that must never be suffered to interfere with the longing for the larger possession of Himself, and fuller consequent likeness to Him, which is expressed in that great though simple phrase "believing towards Him." Such a continual outgoing of effort, as well as the rest and blessedness of reposing on Him, is indispensable for all true gladness. For the intensest activity of our whole being is essential to the real joy of any part of it, and we shall never know the rapture of which humanity, even here and now, is capable until we gather our whole selves, heart, will and all our practical as well as our intellectual powers in the effort to make more of Christ our own, and to minimize the distance between us to a mere vanishing point.[1]

¶ Faith does something from which I think joy specially springs. It appropriates. It takes possession, and you all know how possession of anything gives joy. Though it is only a very little thing, if you have long had possession of it how you cling to it. And still more is this the case with more important things. Now, for instance, you and I may have a natural love of children, and will love children wherever we see them. But what a different emotion is produced in us when we first know that we possess a child of our own! What must it be to possess a Saviour of our own? To possess a Saviour is to possess pardon and peace; it is to possess a holy life; it is to possess the assurance of a happy death and of a blessed eternity. Everything that the mind of man can think of in its highest and holiest moments is included in possessing Christ.[2]

¶ It is this which made the fortunes of Christianity—its gladness, not its sorrow; not its assigning the Spiritual world to Christ, and the material world to the Devil, but its drawing from the Spiritual world a source of joy so abundant that it ran over upon the natural world and transfigured it.[3]

1. This joy is described as (1) unspeakable, and (2) full of glory. Why is it unspeakable?

(1) *Because it is too deep and sacred for words.*—"Still waters run deep." The worldling's joy barely covers the stones of his daily sorrow, and therefore it babbles like a shallow brook as it runs along in its narrow bed; but the Christian's joy is broad and deep, and it scarcely makes any sound as it majestically rolls on like some great river on its way to the sea. The Christian's joy is unspeakable, because it is unfathomable, even by those who enjoy it.

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] James Stalker.
[3] Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 1st Ser., 220.

¶ The climax of every emotion is silence. The climax of anger is not the thunder, not the earthquake, not the fire, not even the still small voice; it is the absence of any voice at all; we say habitually, "He was speechless with rage." The climax of grief is not the cry, not the shriek, not the paroxysm; it is the numbness, the deadness, the torpor, the insensibility to all around. And the climax of praise or joy is silence. When did you experience most difficulty in expressing your admiration of a thing? Was it not when you were thoroughly carried away with rapture! A girl plays a piece of music with great brilliancy. She receives gushing compliments from all but one. That one has been sitting in rapt attention all the time of the performance, yet at the close he only says, "Thank you." I should esteem his the greatest praise of all. His silence comes from the "joy unspeakable"—from an admiration too deep for words, too high for compliments, too intense for plaudits.[1]

¶ Did you ever ask yourself when it was that according to the Book of Revelation there was "silence in heaven about the space of half an hour"? It was when the seventh seal was opened and the prayers of the saints ascended as incense to the Father. In other words, the moment of silence was the moment of ecstatic praise; thanksgiving expressed itself in speechless adoration. There are members of the choir invisible who at times cannot sing—not because they have hung their harps upon the willows, but because they see no willows on which to hang them; they are too full of joy to sing; the fulness of their joy makes it unspeakable.[2]

¶ Dr. Berry of Wolverhampton received a call from Brooklyn to succeed Henry Ward Beecher. He hesitated much. "When I left him on the Friday," says his biographer, "he was still in uncertainty. On the Sunday morning, however, a letter reached the deacons intimating that the call had been declined. I shall never forget the scene when, in the course of the service, the letter was read. The church was crowded; the faces upturned to the pulpit were wistful, sad, and apprehensive. But when, after listening to a forcible statement of the broad and vital issues presented by the invitation to America, the sentence was read by Mr. Bantock, 'I must remain in England,' the moment will never be forgotten by any who were present. There was no sound except a rustle and sigh of relief—not the slightest breach of Christian decorum, only the silent and unconscious tokens of a relief and thankfulness too deep for words and outward signs.

[1] G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, 161. [2] *Ibid.*

His people realized the responsibilities they were assuming in retaining him, and in promising him as their pastor a sphere of usefulness, a ministry as wide as that which would have been his had he chosen to accept one of the most illustrious pulpits in the world, in succession to one of the greatest preachers of the age."[1]

(2) *Because it is too subtle.*—The joy which wells up in the Christian's heart cannot be conveyed in language, being too subtle and volatile a thing, evaporating in the very attempt to pour it from the heart into the bottles of grammatical construction. It cannot be told out. Hence Christians, after exhausting all the vocabulary at their command, feel the utter inadequacy of their highest efforts.

There are sounds, like flakes of snow falling
In their silent and eddying rings;
We tremble,—they touch us so lightly,
Like the feathers from angels' wings.

There are pauses of marvellous silence,
That are full of significant sound,
Like music echoing music
Under water or under ground.

That clarion again! through what valleys
Of deep inward life did it roll,
Ere it blew that astonishing trumpet
Right down in the caves of my soul?[2]

2. It is "full of glory," *i.e.* glorified.

(1) *Joy in Christ is higher than the joys of the world.*—There is nothing more ignoble than the ordinary joys of men. They are too often like the iridescent scum on a stagnant pond, fruit and proof of corruption. They are fragile and hollow, for all the play of colour on them, like a soap bubble that breaks of its own tenuity, and is only a drop of dirty water. Joy is too often ignoble, and yet, although it is by no means the highest conception of what Christ's Gospel can do for us, it is blessed to think that it can take that emotion, so often shameful, so often frivolous, so often lowering rather than elevating, and can lift it into loftiness, and transfigure it, and glorify it, and make it a power,

[1] James S. Drummond, *Charles A. Berry*, 63. [2] F. W. Faber.

a power for good and for righteousness, and for whatsoever things are lovely and of good report in our lives.

¶ With a mighty victory over himself, Francis sprang from his horse, approached the leper, from whose deformed countenance the awful odour of corruption issued forth, placed his alms in the outstretched wasted hand—bent down quickly and kissed the fingers of the sick man, covered with the awful disease, whilst his system was nauseated with the action.

When he again sat upon his horse, he hardly knew how he had got there. He was overcome by excitement, his heart beat, he knew not whither he rode. But the Lord had kept His word. Sweetness, happiness, and joy streamed into his soul—flowed and kept flowing, although his soul seemed full and more full—like the clear stream which, filling an earthen vessel, keeps on pouring and flows over its rim, with an ever clearer, purer stream.[1]

(2) *It is an earnest of the joy to come.*—"Full of glory"—that is, it is Heaven already begun. There is a most significant suggestion here. Some men seem to fancy that they shall gain joy by entering Heaven. But the joy of which we are speaking is not gained or lost by any change of state; it belongs to the immortal soul. You cannot get into Heaven, Heaven must enter you. You must carry Heaven with you in the joy of Christ, or you will find no Heaven beyond the grave. But some one may ask, "Is this feeble rejoicing of the Christian on earth the real element of the eternal Heaven?" Remember, your present joy will then lose its imperfections; your present sacrifice will then be shorn of its painfulness; that which is perfect will have come, and that which is partial will be done away. Then the love which "hopeth all things, endureth all things," will be the light that shall not fail when the lamps of faith and hope are lost in a blaze of glory. Then we shall cease our life of struggle, of endeavour, of unrest, and be filled with the eternal love, which is the eternal joy.

¶ It is of the same substance, if not of the same bulk and weight, as the glory which awaits us on the other side. There are moments of heaven upon earth; prelibations of the river of life; stray notes of the angel choruses; Eschol grapes from the vineyards of the land of promise; flowers from the parterres of Paradise. Oh for more of heaven on the way to heaven! A

[1] J. Jörgensen. *St. Francis of Assisi*, 34.

prayer which we may almost answer for ourselves by seeking more of Him who is Himself the heaven of heaven; and so adopting Bengel's motto: "Christ in the heart; heaven in the heart; the heart in heaven."[1]

Upon the water's face
Of sadness not a trace!
Bright rays from sunny skies—
All *Heaven* reflected lies.

Beneath the golden glow
There lie concealed, we know,
Hopes buried in the wave,
Full many a lonely grave,
Full many a vague unrest,
And many a gem unguess'd;—
Aye, many a lost delight,
All hidden from our sight.

One day life's pulse will cease,
And God will grant us peace:
Yea—*joy* for evermore;
Lost treasures He'll restore.
Earth's last farewells then said,
The sea will yield its dead.[2]

[1] F. B. Meyer, *Tried by Fire*, 44.
[2] Una, *In Life's Garden*, 40.

The Temple of Living Stones.

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THE TEMPLE OF LIVING STONES.

Unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.—1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

1. EARTH has witnessed few scenes more sublime, none in which all the elements of outward magnificence were more strikingly blended with those of deep religious reverence and awe, than that which was presented by the Temple of Solomon on the day of its dedication. The holy and beautiful house crowning, with its fresh undimmed splendour, the terraced steep of Moriah, the vast congregation of worshippers that filled its courts and colonnades, the rich and solemn swell of choral melody, when minstrels and singers joined in the exulting hallelujah, the great altar in the open court with the brazen platform in front of it, on which the youthful prince kneeled down upon his knees in sight of that breathless multitude and spread forth his hands to heaven, the fire descending in answer to his prayer, and consuming the sacrifice, and the cloud of glory filling the house, so that the priests could not stand to minister;—nothing is wanting to complete the solemn impressiveness of the spectacle.

Many centuries had gone by, and the Temple still stood, after many vicissitudes, in something like its earliest grandeur, and on its ancient site, when Jerusalem, the Holy City, witnessed another and a different scene.

In some humble dwelling, in one of its obscurer streets, a little company of worshippers was gathered together in an upper room. There was no outward splendour there to attract the eye, no imposing rites, no stately ceremonial, no altar, no priest, no ringing burst of melody. A few devoted men and women joining in fervent supplication, nothing more, when "suddenly there came

a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind," and cloven tongues of flame were seen hovering over each of them, and in this baptism of fire every heart was kindled with holy love and zeal, every voice burst forth in accents of adoring wonder and praise. In this outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, in fulfilment of the Saviour's promise, and in token of His divine and almighty power, we see the dedication of that spiritual temple which He founded on this earth, we behold the beginning of that Church which is not for one nation, but for all people; which is not in its essential features outward and visible, but inward, set up in all believing, loving, and obedient hearts; which is not to continue for a season and pass away, but is to endure for ever, as a kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy.

2. The Apostle Peter set himself to try to persuade Jewish Christians that the time had come for the admission of the Gentiles to religious equality with the favoured Jewish nation, and that without submitting to the ceremonial law or taking part in the ceremonial sacrifices which (to the ordinary Jewish apprehension) were the price of their spiritual privileges. And the method he adopted was not to belittle the position of Israel as the chosen people of Jehovah, but to suggest that the old Jewish idea of a chosen people was but a poor analogue or type of the position of the Christian Church, that it was in that purely spiritual but none the less visible and concrete society that there was to be found the real fulfilment of the highest aspirations or predictions of Hebrew prophecy. For him the Christian Church was the spiritual Israel. Nor was the new and Catholic society which was to succeed to the narrow Nation-churches of the ancient world a society which could dispense with those fundamental institutions of old-world religion—Temple, Priesthood, Sacrifice. The Church itself, the society, was the true temple—the visible, material, local, yet living, habitation, as it were, of Deity. The whole of this society were Priests. And that society of Priests absorbed into itself the religious functions which everywhere in the old world, and especially in ancient Israel, were shared by kings—"a royal priesthood, a holy nation." Nor was the temple without its sacrifice; for the external animal sacrifices of the old ritual were but a faint counterpart of the spiritual

worship of the new society, the uplifting of will and heart to God, especially in the great act which the ancient Church called the Eucharist or thanksgiving *par excellence*—itself only a symbol or visible embodiment of the one real and true sacrifice of the will to God in a holy life.

I.

The Temple.

The Apostle has in his mind the great Temple at Jerusalem, esteemed and honoured by the whole Jewish race. And he summons up the vision not only of that vast edifice, but of the separate stones, which he well knew must have passed under the builder's eye. And then by a bold venture of imagination he thinks of these stones as endowed with life, and taking their proper place in the building.

1. The Temple has a foundation. Christ is the chief corner stone. The term "stone" speaks to us of all that is solid, massive, steadfast, strong. It suggests at once ideas of immovable principle and ever-persistent purpose, and of capacity at once to resist and to sustain. We read in it how our Master is "the same, yesterday and to-day, and for ever," in a fixity which the cliffs and crags may picture, but to which all the while they are but as fleeting shadows, as unsubstantial dreams, placed beside Him who is "this same Jesus" for ever.

But then, besides, Christ is the *Living* Stone. Taken by itself, the rock-metaphor gives us all we want of certainty and strength; but there is nothing in it of itself to warm the thought and to move the soul to a personal regard. But, behold, He is the Living Stone; He is strength instinct with glowing life. This foundation, this bulwark, this massy tower, "foursquare to opposition"—look at it again; it is not *it*, but He. The Rock has voice, and eyes, and arms, and heart. He lives, all over and all through; and it is with a life which pours itself out in thought, and sympathy, and help, and love, to the refugee upon the Rock.

¶ Here and here only in Holy Scripture is our Lord called the Living Stone. Repeatedly elsewhere, both in the Old Testament and in the New, we read of Him as the Stone, the

Rock, Rock of Ages, Stone of the Corner—*Angulare Fundamentum.* And we have indeed abundant Scriptures where He appears in all the glory and in all the power of Life. "I am he that liveth," "I am the life." But here only do the two truths meet in one magnificent witness to His worth and glory; only here is He named "the Living Stone."[1]

(1) Christ imparts life. We depend upon Christ for life. He is a "living stone," and we who believe are "living stones." But there is this all-important difference between Him and us, viz. He is the Living One, He has life in Himself, while we live only in Him. His life is inherent; ours is derived. He would live on, if we were to die; whereas if He were to die, our life would end for ever.

¶ Here is an elect stone, chosen of God though rejected of men. It stands every test. Satan searched in vain for any flaw in Christ's character; any imperfection, however small, in His obedience. Sir Walter Scott, in *Ivanhoe,* tells us how Locksley, with his cloth-yard shafts "told every rivet" in De Bracy's armour, on the walls of Front de Boeuf's castle. Had there been a weak point anywhere in that armour, the arrows would have found it out, and De Bracy's life would have been forfeited. So, to compare the infinitely greater with the less, with his fiery darts of manifold temptations did Satan tell off every rivet of our blessed Lord's armour of righteousness while here upon earth. Could he have found but one weak point anywhere, His entire work as our Redeemer would have been marred, and He could not have been our Saviour. No weak point, however, could he find—God's elect and precious stone is a tried stone.[2]

(2) In order that we may become living stones, fit for building on the foundation, we must come into touch with Christ. In His own words we must "come to" Him. That is to say, we must commit ourselves to Him in faith.

¶ Suppose a stranger arrives in a town and inquires where he can safely deposit his money. He is told by a friend that N. & M.'s bank is perfectly safe. He thereupon obtains an audited balance-sheet, examines it, and from it learns the resources of the bank. He believes the person who tells him that the bank is good; he believes about the bank that the security it offers is ample; so he trusts his money to the bank's keeping,

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *The Secret of the Presence,* 110.
[2] A. C. Price, *Fifty Sermons,* xi. 19.

i.e. he believes *on* the bank. Or, to put it in another way, a boat-load of holiday makers may often be seen landing on the shore of some English watering-place. The tide is low, and the boat cannot be brought right up on to the dry sand or beach. The passengers do not wish to wet their feet, so the boatman invites them to ride ashore on his back. They believe him when he makes the suggestion; they look at him, and, seeing that he is a stalwart fellow, they believe about him that he is able to do what he proposes, so one by one they trust themselves to him.[1]

The things mysterious
That here vouchsafe to me their apparition
Unto all eyes below are so concealed,

That all their being lies in faith alone,
Whereon high Hope proceeds to base herself,
And so Faith takes the place and rank of substance.

And it behoveth us from our belief
To draw conclusions without other sight;
And hence Faith takes the place of argument.[2]

2. The materials of the Temple are living stones.

(1) *Where are the stones found?*—They are all cut out of the quarry of nature; stone by stone is brought out of that deep cavern, placed upon the living stone, and each united to the other.

¶ I have read that some little while back there was discovered in Jerusalem a deep cavern close by the Damascus Gate, and those who have explored it have come to the conclusion that it is the spot from which the stones were taken to build the glorious Temple of Solomon. It was there that the hammering and the cutting were done. It was there that the stones were shaped, and from thence, by some process that we do not now understand, they were brought from their deep grave, and separately placed in position upon Mount Zion. The blocks of stone were taken one by one out of the bowels of the earth and out of darkness, and then carried by mighty power to the temple walls, until, when the last stone was cut out and placed in position, with shoutings of "grace unto it," the whole building was complete. This forms a beautiful illustration of the way in which the Lord builds His spiritual temple. The Spirit of God goes into the deep black

[1] J. G. Hoare, *The Foundation Stone of Christian Faith*, 228.
[2] Dante, *Paradiso*.

quarry of fallen nature, and there hews out the hidden stones, and by His own almighty power bears them to the foundation stone and places them in a living temple to go no more out for ever.[1]

(2) *There must be no deformity in the stones.* — You have probably visited one or another of our cathedrals, and, if so, you may have noticed that a process of repair is always going on in some part of the building. Stones once thought good and sound have developed a flaw; or under the influence of the rain and frost and gases of the atmosphere have been found to be losing their solidity, turning back and crumbling into their original sand. As material stones, this is only according to nature; there is nothing to be done but to remove them and put good ones in their places. But in the spiritual building the conditions are not the same. We who are living stones can by God's help resist the deteriorating and wasting forces of the world. If we will, we may retain our solidity, our firmness, our strength, yes, even our polish and our lustre; and it is our duty so to do. We may be stones placed in inconspicuous positions. But if we are so honoured as to have any, even the most obscure, place in such a temple, how great should be our joy! We may be like those stones Ruskin found built in where they could not possibly be seen save by those who sought them, but still carved and finished as exquisitely as those that were in the façade of the building. If the master Builder knows that we are there, is not that enough to induce us to resolve that by Divine help not a whit of our symmetry and beauty shall be lost?

¶ A beloved and beautiful memory rises before me—a friend of my early undergraduate days, called to die before his own degree, but first called to *live*, as a living stone. Before he entered Trinity College he had passed through a military academy, a place which at that time was a scene of deep moral pollution. Gentle and even facile as he was by nature, God, just as he entered the place, had made him "a living stone." With quiet, unshaken, unswerving steadfastness, under acutest difficulties, he *lived*, and he was a *rock*. And by the time he left the academy—I record a fact—vice was out of fashion there.[2]

(3) *The building is ever going on.*—The workers are legion. Paul, with his relentless, flaming logic; John, with eagle eye, scanning and then writing of the future and the past; Augustine,

[1] A. G. Brown. [2] H. C. G. Moule, *The Secret of the Presence*, 214.

with his pauseless, countless toils of pen and speech; Chrysostom consecrating his golden eloquence to themes of transcendent and golden worth; Bede labouring on our own northern shore, and in making the blessed Gospel accessible to the Saxon people finding "the last dear service of his parting breath"; Luther, with his strong human tenderness and unquailing knowledge; Calvin, with his severe purity and indomitable industry; Latimer, with his home-spun, ready, and racy heart-compelling speech; Bunyan, that true Greatheart of countless pilgrims; Wesley, that statesman; Whitefield, that captain of preachers. Time would fail us to tell of the great preachers and teachers with voice and pen who have lived to win souls to Christ. If His service can be ennobled by human associations, it is ennobled by such names as these. Let us be worthy of them. And Christ's work is ever going on; His temple is ever rising. Men of varied faculty are engaged in the one work. The builders are many, the Architect is one. Builders pass, but new builders take up the work and it goes on. New methods of Christian labour may supplement the old. The "tongues" of old theology may cease in a larger and more loving language; but, amid all, the Spiritual Temple is rising.

¶ In the crypt of Fountains Abbey, as in other ancient buildings, you may see windows of varied kinds of architecture—Saxon, Norman, Gothic. The Abbey was long in building. The first builders died. But by other hands, and in other styles, the unfinished work went on. So in Christ's Church. New styles, so to speak, may mark it from age to age. But though builders die, the Divine Architect survives. And He sees to the continuity of the work.

Have you heard the golden city
  Mentioned in the legends old?
Everlasting light shines o'er it,
  Wondrous tales of it are told.
Only righteous men and women
  Dwell within its gleaming wall;
Wrong is banished from its borders,
  Justice reigns supreme o'er all.

We are builders of that city;
  All our joys and all our groans
Help to rear its shining ramparts,
  All our lives are building stones.

But a few brief years we labour,
Soon our earthly day is o'er,
Other builders take our places,
And our place knows us no more.

But the work which we have builded,
Oft with bleeding hands and tears,
And in error and in anguish,
Will not perish with the years.
It will last, and shine transfigured
In the final reign of Right;
It will merge into the splendours
Of the City of the Light.[1]

II.

The Priesthood.

St. Peter changes the figure from "*a spiritual house*" to "*a holy priesthood.*" After saying, "Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house," he adds, "to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

To understand the meaning of this abrupt change of figure, we must bear in mind that St. Peter was "the Apostle to the circumcision." He wrote to Jews, and he sought to show them that by becoming Christians they lost neither temple, nor priesthood, nor sacrifices. They had them all. They were themselves all. They were the temple, "built up a spiritual house," for God's own habitation. They were priests unto God; "a holy priesthood." And it was their privilege "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

The New Testament writers were men whose earlier days had been passed in a Church where sacrifices were offered, where there was an altar, a priest, animal victims. It is true that their ordinary weekly worship was presented in synagogues which had no altar, no priest, no victims; where the desk took the place of the altar, and the reader of the priest. But none the less the temple was the place where the culminating act of worship took place, and in that temple the chief place was assigned to the altar, and the chief function devolved upon the priest. Sacrifice—real

[1] Felix Adler.

sacrifice—the actual offering of oxen and sheep and doves—real sacrifice was the chief rite of the Church to which the Apostles in their earlier days belonged. Hence the language of sacrifice was familiar to them as household words, so familiar that they could not throw it off when they exchanged Judaism for Christianity. But though they did not wholly abandon the old phraseology, they gave to it a new and higher meaning. They applied it to the offering of self rather than of oxen or sheep. Christianity went deeper than Judaism. Judaism was content with the offering of bulls and goats. Christianity was content only with the offering of spiritual sacrifices. These it declared were the only sacrifices acceptable to God.

1. *They were a spiritual Priesthood.*—God dwells in us, and so the obscurest, humblest Christian is greater than the most venerable and splendid of the buildings which kings and nobles and mighty nations have enriched with gold and silver and costly marbles, which have been adorned by the genius of famous painters, and in which many generations of men have worshipped God. It is man that is sacred, above all when made one with Christ. God is a spirit, and He dwells not in material buildings, no matter by what solemn and mysterious rites it may be attempted to consecrate them. He, a Spirit, dwells in the spirit of man and reveals His righteousness and love in the life of man.

¶ To me the poor seamstress that turns into Westminster Abbey for half an hour's quiet and peace and meditation on Christ who has saved her is more sacred than the memorable building which is associated with the most famous events in the history of our country; and she should be treated with greater reverence. To me the beggar in his rags on the steps of St. Peter's is more sacred than the vast church which is the material centre of a communion extending over the whole world. In the Christian man is the true shekinah, even though the visible glory which was the symbol of the true has now passed away. The inner life of the Christian man is the true holy of holies. God is there.[1]

¶ It is certain that to the writers of the New Testament, the word Priest, when not applied to the sacrificial functionaries of the Jews, implied a spiritual function of every believer. It is never once applied by them to the officers of the Christian community. It did not summon up to their minds the ceremonies

[1] R. W. Dale.

of public worship, but the acts of common life. And this mode of speech became habitual with the early fathers. These fathers, says Bishop Kaye, used a language directly opposite to that which counts the New Testament use of these words as merely metaphorical. "They regarded the spiritual sacrifice as the true and proper sacrifice, the external sacrificial act as merely the sign and symbol." [1]

2. *They were an holy Priesthood.*—In the Jewish dispensation this meant no more, possibly, than an outward separation to the service of God—the priests in the temple, the vestments of their ministry were said to be ceremonially holy. But certainly more is meant by the Apostle in the text than this ritual and external sanctity. The holiness of which he speaks consists in the possession of that mind which was in Christ Jesus, in the reinstatement in us of that image of God which was lost by the disobedience of the fall.

¶ In one of the old Cathedrals in Europe the guide bids the visitor watch a certain spot until the light from a window falls upon it. There he sees, carved on a rafter, a face of such marvellous beauty that it is the very gem of the great building. The legend is, that, when the architect and masters were planning the adornment of the cathedral, an old man came in and begged leave to do some work. They felt that his tottering steps and trembling hands unfitted him for any great service; so they sent him up to the roof, and gave him permission to carve upon one of the rafters. He went his way, and day by day he wrought there in the darkness. One day he was not seen to come down, and going up they found him lying lifeless on the scaffolding, with his sightless eyes turned upward. And there they saw a face carved on the rafter, a face of such exceeding beauty that architects and great men bared their heads as they looked upon it, and recognized the master in him who lay there still in death.

In the Church of the living God we are all set to carve the beauty of the face of Christ, not on the rafters or walls of any cathedral, but on our own heart and life. Be it ours to do this work with such care and skill that, when our eyes are closed in death, men may look with reverence upon the beauty of the face our hands have fashioned. Some of us may feel ourselves too feeble, or too unskilled, to do any great work in this world for Christ; but none are too feeble or too unskilled to carve the beauty of Christ on our life. And it may be that in the time of

[1] Dean Fremantle, *The Gospel of the Secular Life*, 177.

great revealing, it shall appear that some trembling disciple among us, timid and shrinking, whose work is in some quiet corner, out of sight, has wrought the beauty of Christ-likeness in an exquisiteness which shall outshine all that any even of the greatest of us have done.[1]

III.

The Sacrifices.

1. The sacrifices are spiritual, like the temple in which they are offered. They originate in the spiritual life of man, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. They are spiritual acts. Mere external acts, however striking, however splendid, however impressive, are worthless. Only if there is real spiritual force in them can they be acceptable to God, and then only through Christ. The external pomp, the artistic beauty are of no account, but for the excitement of passion and delight which the pomp and the beauty may create. The sacrifices we have to offer are spiritual sacrifices.

¶ The value of a material sacrifice lies in the thing given; the value of the spiritual offering consists in the will to give it. A material sacrifice has its beginning in an act; a spiritual sacrifice has its beginning in a thought. A material sacrifice is one which, by its very nature, demands constant repetition; a spiritual sacrifice, if it be a full expression of the heart, is offered once for all.

¶ I am on a pastoral round among lowly cottage homes. I ask at a certain door for one of our devoted church members, a labourer's wife. She is not at home, but may be found five or six doors higher up in the street. We go and inquire for her there. It is the home of a sick friend, another labourer's wife, and when we find her she says to her minister: "You see Mary is ill and in bed, and I considered what I could do to help her; and I decided that I could at least do her week's washing for her." It was beautiful! Our sister was a priest, or priestess, if you like, offering, amidst the steam of the washhouse, a spiritual sacrifice.[2]

2. The sacrifice will mean—

(1) *Worship.*—The essential idea of sacrificial worship is communion, not propitiation—the identification of our wills with God's by definite spiritual effort as a means to the identification

[1] J. R. Miller, *Glimpses through Life's Windows*, 17. [2] J. C. Story.

of the will with God's will in every act and moment of our lives. And this sacrifice of worship, of which the Christian Eucharist forms the highest act, must be looked upon as the act of the whole community. Every Christian must take his part in it. It is not a thing that can be done for one man by another, or rather in one sense it is a thing that can and must be done by every man for every other: since every prayer of the Christian is social, offered by him not as an isolated individual but as a member of the community, for the whole community as well as for himself.

¶ Of Philip Edward Pusey (Pusey's only son) Dean Burgon says, "Though too deaf to hear what was being spoken, he was constant in his attendance at the daily Service and at Holy Communion: yes, and was absorbed in what was going on. A man, he was, of great religious earnestness, and consistent heart-felt piety. I cannot express what a help and comfort dear Philip was to *me*, nor how much I felt his loss: nay, how much I feel it still."[1]

¶ We went to the cathedral, which is mere heaps upon heaps: a huge, misshapen thing, which has no more of symmetry than of neatness belonging to it. I was a little surprised to observe that neither in this, nor in any other of the Romish churches where I have been, is there, properly speaking, any such thing as joint worship; but one prays at one shrine or altar, and another at another, without any regard to or communication with one another. As we came out of the church a procession began on the other side of the churchyard. One of our company scrupling to pull off his hat, a zealous Catholic presently cried out, "Knock down the Lutheran dog." But we prevented any contest by retiring into the church.[2]

(2) *Mediation.*—It is only through the Christian community that the individual can enter into this knowledge of Christ which is the knowledge of God—only through the tradition of Christian teaching handed down by the community, through the religious life which pervades it, through the ideal which is more or less perfectly realized in its corporate life and in the life of some at least among its individual members. Thus it is no platitude to say that every Christian is bound to be a priest; for to say that he is a priest means that he is bound to take a part in this great task of revealing God to his fellow-men, by word and by deed, by

[1] J. W. Burgon, *The Lives of Twelve Good Men*, i. 17.
[2] *The Journal of John Wesley*, ii. 8.

the ideal that he proclaims with his lips and cherishes in his heart and sets forth in his life; by contributing to the creation of a Christian public opinion, and by impressing and (so far as may be) enforcing that opinion upon the whole society in which he lives, and so taking his part in the Church's fundamental task of binding and loosing. It is of the essence of all true communion with God to diffuse itself to other men.

¶ The Archbishop said that as a child he had been very much puzzled by the words of the marriage service—"With my body I thee worship." He went to his mother and asked, "How can one worship with one's body?" His mother explained that worship was not used here in the usual spiritual sense, but meant that the husband would do such things for his wife as opening the door for her, fetching her a chair, etc. The little boy secretly made up his mind to watch his father, to see whether he performed these little services for his wife. "But it was no use," added the Archbishop, "for he always did."[1]

(3) *Service.*—The materials of sacrifice are all around us, in our common work, in the little calls of Providence, in the trivial crosses we are challenged to take up; even in the very recreation of our lives. The great point is to have the mind set upon seeking and seeing in all things the service of Christ and the glory of God, and then every trifle which that mind touches, every piece of work it handles, every dispensation it encounters, becomes at once a sacrifice.

¶ A young Chinese girl was brought to the Presbyterian Mission Hospital at Canton. She was doomed to blindness and lameness, so her mistress abandoned her. The doctors amputated her leg, and gave her little tasks to perform and taught her the love of the Saviour. She developed leprosy, and was forced to leave the kind friends about her, and betake herself to the darkness and horror of a leper settlement. But she went a Christian, and in two years that blind crippled leper built up a band of Christians in that leper settlement and in five years a Church grew out of her work. That poor crippled invalid life is to-day a centre of joy and service, and other leper villages are sending to her to ask about the wonderful good news which can bring joy even to outcasts.

[1] *Frederick Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury*, i. 80.

A Propitiation and a Pattern.

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A Propitiation and a Pattern.

Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps.—1 Pet. ii. 21.

These words are a striking illustration of the way in which the Gospel brings Christ's principles to bear upon morals and duty. The Apostle is doing nothing more than exhorting a handful of slaves to the full and complete and patient acceptance of their hard lot, and in order to teach a very homely and lowly lesson to the squalid minds of a few captives, he brings in the mightiest of all lessons by pointing to the most beautiful, most blessed, and most mysterious fact in the world's history—the cross of Christ.

There are two things in the text—

I. Christ as a Propitiation—"Christ suffered for you."

II. Christ as a Pattern—"leaving you an example."

But more important than either of these things, highly important as they are, is their connexion. Christ is of little avail as an example if He is not first a propitiation; and again the propitiation is of little worth if we do not follow the example. We shall take the two separately, but first of all let us take them together.

1. A large number of those who profess and call themselves Christians would fain blot out Calvary from the system of Christian morality. They would tell us that it was only an accident in the onward march of Divine revelation, that the Saviour's sufferings had in them nothing mediatorial, nothing atoning; and, on the other hand, there are men who would hold so tightly by faith in the power of the Cross of the blessed Saviour as to banish from their minds the idea of an honest, a diligent, and a loving copy of His example. They will say, "Look

to the Cross alone, trust in the Cross alone, and all will and must be right." Good people there may be found in these two extremes, but the scribe that is well instructed in the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God will not be satisfied with either one or the other; he must have both together. Like the two inscriptions, like the two faces on a coin, which must be there before it can be made current of the realm, so the Divine truth has these two manifestations,—first the suffering for sin, next the example of godly life.

2. The Antinomian, the man who thinks that all religion is centred in the single grace of faith, looks at Christ as his Saviour, but forgets that He is also his Example. The Socinian professes to follow Jesus as an Example, but rejects Him as a Saviour. The Bible-taught Christian unites these two opposite systems into one. Confessing with St. Peter that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," he also allows with St. Paul that he who would taste of this salvation must "so walk as he walked." In the simple and unmistakable language of the text, believing with all his heart that Christ suffered for him, he has an equally deep conviction that He has left us an example that we should follow His steps.

3. Without the Atonement there would have been little use of the Example. Moses is an example, and Abraham, and Joseph, and David, and every holy man or woman that ever lived—many in our own times and neighbourhood, whom we may ourselves have known. St. Paul, who was the last person in the world to speak presumptuously or vaingloriously, exhorts the Philippians to be followers together of him, and to mark those who walked so as they had him for an ensample. And yet in another Epistle after calling his readers' attention to the great cloud of witnesses with whom they were encompassed, all of them "examples" of patience, faith, and other heavenly graces, he does not suffer their thoughts to rest there, or on any merely human object, but carries them on with him still further, even to the foot of the Cross, there bidding them look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith; "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

¶ If ever the history of human error comes to be written faithfully and exhaustively, it will be found, I venture to say, that by far the largest proportion of human mistakes, whether in the region of theology or in the region of philosophy, will be found to have their origin, not so much in the abstract grasp of error as in the partial grasp of truth. The danger is inconceivably great of a shallow and imperfect comprehension of the mind and will of God, and in all ages and under all circumstances men have been found taking up this or that or the other statement of God's most holy Word; emphasizing it and giving to it a dignity and an importance, not possibly in itself greater than it deserves, but relatively to the other truths of God's Divine Word. And hence it comes to pass, that amidst the multitudes of divisions and parties and sects and schisms that Christianity presents to-day, and, indeed, has presented in all ages, there is no party or sect or schism that has not in some degree a grasp of some kind of Divine truth and revelation, the mistake and the misfortune being that it esteems this particle and portion equal to the entire, and forgets the dignity and importance of declaring the whole counsel of God.[1]

I.

The Propitiation.

"Christ also suffered for you."

1. The mystery of suffering! Suffering beyond any doubt is the commonest feature of human life. There are none who escape. There are the weird, strange sufferings of childhood, which grow into the sterner sufferings of our manhood; and these pass into the special sufferings of old age. It reaches every portion of our being. Our body is held in the grip of physical suffering; our minds know the exquisite suffering of intense perplexity, our hearts are continually all but broken in the woes of life and our wills in the spheres of intense suffering, in the intense discipline to which we are called upon to submit in life; and the inner shrine of our being is the scene of our most exquisite suffering, the spiritual sorrows of children of God. Suffering—it casts its shadow over our life. Looked at upon the surface, all life may seem to be a comedy; but it is a very weird and pathetic comedy, for beneath this comedy lies the awful tragedy of life.

[1] Prebendary Cross.

¶ To-day I had a long and strange interview with a lady who has recently become a member of the congregation. . . . She asked me if I had ever known a case of trial so severe as hers. "Yes," I replied: "numbers; it is the case of all. Suffering is very common, so is disappointment." "Are our affections to be all withered?"—"Very often, I believe." "Then why were they given me?"—"I am sure I cannot tell you that, but I suppose it would not have been very good for you to have had it all your own way." "Then, do you think I am better for this blighting succession of griefs?"—"I do not know, but I know you ought to be." Wordsworth was lying open on the table, and I pointed her to these lines:—

> Then was the truth received into my heart,
> That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
> If from the affliction somewhere do not grow
> Honour which could not else have been, a faith,
> An elevation, and a sanctity,
> If new strength be not given nor old restored,
> The blame is ours, not Nature's.

The deep undertone of this world is sadness: a solemn bass occurring at measured intervals, and heard through all other tones. Ultimately, all the strains of this world's music resolve themselves into that tone; and I believe that, rightly felt, the Cross, and the Cross alone, interprets the mournful mystery of life—the sorrow of the Highest, the Lord of Life; the result of error and sin, but ultimately remedial, purifying, and exalting.[1]

2. Christ is the first of sufferers. Nothing was wanting, humanly speaking, to make patience impossible. The natural sensitiveness of His tender frame, the ingenious appliances of torture, such as a crown of thorns pressed down upon the head and the temples, the coarse brutality of His executioners, the vivid consciousness of the Sufferer sustained from moment to moment, a consciousness directed upon all that He was enduring, and upon all also that immediately awaited Him—the continuous succession of varied sufferings without any relaxation throughout His passion, without any one pause or relaxation—this might well have exhausted patience. And what His mental sufferings must have been we may infer distantly from the agony in the garden, in which, without any outward cause, His body yielded all the

[1] *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 285.

symptoms of a violent convulsion. His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground.

¶ If you will read this Epistle of Peter at your leisure, you will see that while, with Paul, he makes the cross of Christ the centre of his teaching, Paul speaks more about His death, and Peter more about His sufferings. Throughout the letters of Peter the phrase runs, and the phrase has come into modern Christian usage almost entirely from this Apostle. That vivid imagination of his, when brought to the contemplation of his Master's trials, supported by his warm heart, which could have said, not once only but always, and with truth, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," led Peter to dwell not merely on the single fact of the death, but also on the accompaniments of that awful death, of the mental and physical pain, and especially the temper of the Saviour.

I saw in Siena pictures,
  Wandering wearily;
I sought not the names of the masters,
  Nor the works men care to see;
But once in a low-ceiled passage
  I came on a place of gloom,
Lit here and there with halos
  Like saints within the room.
The pure, serene, mild colours
  The early artists used
Had made my heart grow softer,
  And still on peace I mused.
Sudden I saw the Sufferer,
  And my frame was clenched with pain;
Perchance no throe so noble
  Visits my soul again.
Mine were the stripes of the scourging;
  On my thorn-pierced brow blood ran;
In my breast the deep compassion
  Breaking the heart for man.
I drooped with heavy eyelids,
  Till evil should have its will;
On my lips was silence gathered;
  My waiting soul stood still.
I gazed, nor knew I was gazing;
  I trembled, and woke to know
Him whom they worship in heaven
  Still walking on earth below.

Once have I borne His sorrows
  Beneath the flail of fate!
Once in the woe of His passion,
  I felt the soul grow great!
I turned from my dead Leader;
  I passed the silent door;
The gray-walled street received me;
  On peace I mused no more.[1]

3. The sufferings of Christ are inexplicable on any other supposition than that they were *for others*. They could not be the due reward of personal demerit; for, if He suffered more than other men justly, He must have been worse than all men; instead of which He was the best of men, the sinless One in a world of sinners. If then He could not suffer because of personal ill-desert, being wholly free from fault, did He suffer by the unjust decree of Heaven? That again is an impossible supposition; for not only would it destroy the righteousness of God, but it would also contradict the experience of Christ Himself in His sufferings. For He never manifests any sense of being unjustly dealt with. Indeed no other explanation of His painful experiences is possible than that which He Himself gives, and which is repeated in the teachings of the Apostles, namely, that He was a sufferer *for others*; that He endured voluntarily that which came upon Him, and with a conscious reference to other persons. "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" are His own words. The Apostles simply repeat that which Christ felt and declared when they say, as did St. Paul, "Christ died for us," or as St. Peter, "Christ suffered for us." It was this fact that reconciled our Lord to His sufferings and cross; it was this that led Him to take them up in a voluntary manner.

¶ It is interesting to notice how, as his life went on, and his inspiration became more full, this Apostle came to understand, as being the very living and heart centre of his religion, the thing which at first was a stumbling-block and mystery to him. You remember that when Christ was here on earth, and was surrounded by all His disciples, the man who actually led antagonism to the thought of a saving Messiah was this very Apostle Peter. You remember how he displayed his ignorance in the words, "This shall not be unto thee, Lord"; and how his audacity rose to

[1] George Edward Woodberry.

the height of saying, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake"—so little did he understand the purposes of Christ's suffering and death. And even after His resurrection we do not find that Peter in his early preaching had got as far as he seems to have got in this letter. You will notice that here he speaks a great deal about the sufferings of Christ, which he puts side by side and in contrast with God's glorifying of His Son. Christ's cross, which at first had come to him as a rejection, has now come to him in all its reality, and to him there was the one grand thing, "He suffered for us," as though he realized Christ in all His beauty and purity, and not only as a beautiful teacher and dear friend. That which at first seemed to him as an astounding mystery and perfect impossibility, he now comes to understand. With those two little words, "for us," where there was before impossibility, disappointment, and anomaly, the anomaly vanishes, although the mystery becomes deeper.[1]

4. The doctrine of the Atonement, then, is this, that we who were by nature "afar off from God," in Christ are "brought nigh": that God, for His sake, "hath blotted out our transgressions," "and our sins and iniquities will he remember no more": that He gives "the water of life," to all who will take it, freely: that we are not, and cannot be, saved by our own righteousness: that God's purpose towards us is full of mercy and tenderness in His blessed Son: that "He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance": that those will be saved who, renouncing their own merits and all carnal titles to God's favour, look for salvation only through the blood of Christ; who come unto Him that they may have life; who appropriate the benefits of His sacrifice by personal faith, confessing that "they are bought with a price," and feeling that "he who glorieth must glory in the Lord." It is a blessed and comfortable doctrine! the anchor of our hopes as well as the object of our faith; the only sure ground of peace, and confidence, and joy; not only enabling but impelling us to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." It has bridged over the wide gulf that lay between ourselves and God; and shows even to the most obdurate sinner, if he will only follow it, a way by which he may yet hear of joy and gladness; and to the heaviest-laden a place where they may find rest unto

A. Maclaren.

their souls. "God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

¶ For poor Jean Valjean, weeping bitterly for his sins, while he watched the boy play with the buttercups and prayed that God would give him, the red and horny-handed criminal, to feel again as he felt when he pressed his dewy cheek against his mother's knee—for Jean Valjean is there no suffering friend, no forgiving heart? Is there no bosom where poor Magdalene can sob out her bitter confession? What if God were the soul's father! What if He too serves and suffers vicariously! What if nature and life do but interpret in the small this Divine principle existing in the large in Him who is infinite! What if Calvary is God's eternal heartache, manifest in time! What if, sore-footed and heavy-hearted, bruised with many a fall, we should come back to the old home, from which once we fled away, gay and foolish prodigals! The time was when, as small boys and girls, with blinding tears, we groped toward the mother's bosom and sobbed out our bitter pain and sorrow with the full story of our sin. What if the form on Calvary were like the king of eternity, toiling up the hill of time, his feet bare, his locks all wet with the dew of night, while he cries: "Oh, Absalom! my son, my son, Absalom!" What if we are Absalom, and have hurt God's heart! Reason staggers. Groping, trusting, hoping, we fall blindly on the stairs that slope through darkness up to God. But, falling, we fall into the arms of Him who hath suffered vicariously for man from the foundation of the world.[1]

II.

The Example.

"Leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps"

i. Christ is an example.

1. The word "example" in the text is a highly technical word. It was a word that was specifically employed by the old writers to indicate the headline of a copy, given by the master for the pupil to imitate, to trace out and to follow. And if we regard the blessed Saviour's example in that light, much good fruit will be produced in our lives.

In the economy of Divine grace our blessed Master, in the three-and-thirty years of His earthly sojourn, was employed in

[1] N. D. Hillis, *The Investment of Influence*, 86.

writing the great headline of the copy; and as He gathers the children of the ages round about Him, generation after generation, century after century, place after place, nation after nation, He says, "I have left you an example"; meaning by that, that pains and diligent care must be taken to copy that great example, and also that the eye may be lovingly and constantly fixed upon that Jesus, who is alike the Author and the Finisher of our faith.

¶ How easily and contentedly we speak of Jesus Christ as our example. Do we realize what it means? If we did, it would revolutionize our life. Do we begin to know our Bible as He did? Do we begin to pray as He did? How thoughtful He was for others, how patient toward dulness, how quiet under insult! Think of what it meant for Him to take a basin and towel like a slave and wash the disciples' feet! Do we stoop to serve? Can any one say of us, as was said of Him, that we go about "doing good"? Think of His words, servants of His, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." "Christ-like" is a word often on our lips. Do not speak it too lightly. It is the heart of God's predestination. It is our high calling.[1]

2. "That ye should follow." As Christ gained disciples, or as any proffered to be His disciples, the first and only direction He gave them was to become devoted followers of Himself personally. Instead of laying before them any laws of His Kingdom, or any definite rules by which to regulate their lives, His one exhortation was—forsake all and follow Me. Instead of instituting any inquiry into their moral character or their religious experience—as men do now—the only test He applied was to their love for Him and the need they felt for His love and friendship, which of course would have to be strong in order to secure a consistent and devoted discipleship. Hence, to the words "forsake all," He often added "take up the cross and follow me."

It is clear that by following Him, He meant exactly what we mean when we present His life as an example; He meant entering into the spirit and manner, and thereby into the very deeds of His life. To this precept, He in many ways gave great force, as, for instance, when He sent them forth on evangelic missions invested with the powers that He Himself possessed, and when He spoke such striking words as to their being one with Him, even as He was one with the Father.

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 50.

¶ And how shall I follow Jesus the Christ? The first requisite is a personal relationship to Him. From the Cross where He has saved me I set out on the pilgrim-road of imitation. Sometimes I hear it alleged against Thomas à Kempis's golden little book, that it fails to insist on these initial experiences of pardon and reconcilement. But the good monk regards them as having been already tasted and passed through. As truly as Charles Wesley, he is persuaded that the Saviour must cover his defenceless head with the shadow of His wing. Has He done so? I cannot wear the loveliness of Jesus till I drink deep of the forgiveness of Jesus.

And, next, I must have a constant remembrance of the real humanness of my Lord. The radiant lights of divinity and eternity gleam about His person. But His example ceases to have practical interest for me unless I feel that He was and is my real Kinsman and my very Brother. I must not lift Him into a magical world from which I am excluded. Where He has gone in advance of me, I can walk in patience behind.

This is necessary, too, that love for Him leaps and flames in my soul. No amount of intellectual comprehension and no attention to worship and work are enough. The heart must enthrone Him, must adore Him, must turn to Him with the inevitableness and the trust of the sunflower turning to the sun. I can resemble Him only if mine is an affection profound, controlling, pervasive, revealing itself in look and word and deed and behaviour, not to be checked by ridicule and opposition, not to be dried up.

And a certain aloofness of spirit is required. Of spirit, not of body. I am not to retire to any hermitage or desert or solitary's cell. No arbitrary fences are to divide me from my neighbours. Yet, if I would be an epistle of Christ, I must hold on firmly to the heavenly life around the earthly life; my heart will move there while my feet stay here. "The holy man," said Jacob Böhme, who made and mended shoes, "hath his church about him everywhere, even in himself. He standeth and walketh, sitteth and lieth down, in his church."

And there must be intimacy with my Lord. His thought, His temper, His motives, His decisions, I am to share. So I must commit myself implicitly and continuously to His Holy Spirit, who takes His things and shows them to me. I must dwell much with Himself in prayer. I must read often the story of His life and death. I must accustom myself to consider Him, the Apostle and High Priest of my confession.

These are some of the modes in which I shall touch and grasp

and keep the grace and the wisdom and the power and the gentleness and the splendour of Jesus Christ.[1]

¶ In one way or another the idea of withdrawing entirely from the world engaged Francis' thoughts. He often discussed it with the Brothers of the Order and weighed the pro and con. There was one thing that always prevented him from choosing the hermit life, and that was the example of our Lord. Jesus could have chosen to remain in His glory at His Father's right hand, but instead descended to earth to endure the vicissitudes of human life and to die the bitter death of shame on the Cross. And it was the Cross that had from the first been Francis' model, the Cross to which he applied with the rest of the Middle Ages God's word to Moses: *Fac secundum exemplar*—"Make it according to the pattern, that was shewn thee in the mount."[2]

3. "His steps." As a guide going across a wet moor with a traveller calls out, "Step where I step, or else you will be bogged," so we must tread in the steps of the Saviour, and then we shall come safe to the other side.

¶ It is said of the Bohemian king, Wenceslaus, that on one occasion he set forth in a wild snowstorm, when the frost was keen and the air bitterly cold, on an enterprise of mercy and love. His servant, following him barefooted, as was the habit in those days, could not keep up to his master by reason of the bleeding of his naked feet as they trod upon the sharp protruding icicles. So the king said to his follower, "Watch where I plant my steps, and plant yours there too." And so the master advanced and the servant followed, treading in the master's steps.

¶ Dean Stanley was one day showing, as he loved to do, some working men over Westminster Abbey. One of them in conversation referred to the Dean's work on Sinai and Palestine, which he had just been reading, and remarked, as he thought of its graphic descriptions of the Holy Land, and how the Dean had actually stood upon the sacred soil, and personally visited the hallowed places, "How beautiful to have been able to walk where the Saviour had walked." The man said, "I shall never forget the answer, nor the look with which it was accompanied, as the Dean replied: 'Beautiful indeed, and not beyond the power of any man to endeavour to walk in the footsteps of the Saviour.'"

4. Our Lord's life, as recorded in the Gospels, does not present situations corresponding to all those in which human beings may

[1] A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place*, 350. [2] J. Jörgensen, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 148.

be placed. Perhaps too much is sometimes attempted to be made out, with regard to the extent to which the life of Christ tallies in its outward features with the lives of men. It is true that Jesus was an infant, a youth, and a grown man; and it is profitable to consider Him as therefore sharing our infancy, our boyhood, and our adult age. But then it must be admitted that He was not an old man. He was a son, a friend, and presumably an artisan. But He was not a husband or a father; not a landowner or a tradesman. We make perhaps a graver admission still, when we say that He was not a woman. These admissions we might carry on without limit, as we reckon up the various relations and circumstances in which we may be placed. They prove conclusively that a close repetition of the acts of our Lord cannot be what is meant, when it is said that His example is one for all men to follow. If a father seeks to know, for instance, how he ought to act in the management of his children, he will not find it reported how the Son of God acted in similar circumstances. Even when we find a correspondence of circumstances, and can learn how Jesus acted when placed as one of us may be placed, we ought not to consider the following of His example to be simply the repeating of His actions.

¶ The most intelligent Christians here cannot see why they should not have everything we have. They have no national costume, and every one of them would like to have clothes just like ours, from hat to shoes, regardless of the fact that they would be miserable in such dress. One of our elders made me fairly shudder, some months ago, by appearing at communion in a thick overcoat. He sweltered in it through a long hot day with a look of supreme contentment. It was a white man's coat, and therefore must be right. I suppose I was the only person in the audience who did not envy him.[1]

5. It is clearly the *spirit* in which our Saviour acted that we are to follow. The details of our Lord's conduct may be very helpful in showing us how to act in particular situations; but their highest and most general value consists in their illustrating or interpreting the *mind* of Christ. As we learn to understand our fellow-men not through metaphysical or ethical descriptions of them, but through the observation of their acts, so is it with our knowledge of the Saviour. It was of infinite importance that

[1] E. C. Parsons, *A Life for Africa*, 155.

we should know the Son of God to be a living person, and should perceive the Spirit that was in Him to be a fountain of conduct, sending forth the streams of word and deed. Everything He did, every word He spoke, has this value, that it contributes to our knowledge of Him who spoke and acted. The single recorded incident of His boyhood, His conversation with the doctors in the Temple, and what we are told of His submission to His mother and Joseph, and His growing in favour with man as well as with God, cannot be thought of with much profit, except in direct connexion with His nature and character. All the acts of His ministry become most instructive when we see in them so many tokens of the simplicity, the sympathy, the kindness, the fearlessness of our Lord's character. The *actions* are most precious and indispensable to bring us into acquaintance with the *spirit* out of which they proceeded; and when they have done that, their chief work is done. Thenceforward, what we have to do with is the spirit.

¶ It does us good to see how faithful persons have discharged duties which we ourselves are called to perform, those of husbands and wives and parents, of lawyers and merchants, of domestic servants, of Christian ministers; and how a life that might have been solitary has been glorified, like that of a Mary Carpenter or a Sister Dora, by special enterprises of noble voluntary service. It is clear therefore that the example left us by the Lord Jesus is one which can be largely supplemented by other lives. Good Christians may be said to fill up that which is behind or lacking in the actions and instructions as well as the afflictions of Christ for the sake of His body, which is the Church.[1]

Not Thine the bigot's partial plea,
Nor Thine the zealot's ban;
Thou well canst spare a love of Thee
Which ends in hate of man.

Our Friend, our Brother, and our Lord,
What may Thy service be?—
Nor name, nor form, nor ritual word,
But simply following Thee.

We bring no ghastly holocaust,
We pile no graven stone;
He serves Thee best who loveth most
His brothers and Thy own.[2]

[1] J. Ll. Davies, *Social Questions*, 115. [2] John Greenleaf Whittier.

ii. Christ is especially an example to sufferers.

1. In His public teaching our Lord made much of patient submission to undeserved wrong. He pronounced those men blessed who suffered for righteousness' sake. "Blessed are ye," He says, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely. Rejoice and be exceeding glad." Not in exemption from suffering, but in truthful endurance, would His true followers find their peace. "In your patience, possess ye your souls."

2. Our Lord teaches us by His sufferings more than in any other way. By these He reveals to us the love of God: by these He points to the value of heaven. These sufferings are the measure of the gravity of our sins, of the miseries of hell, of the solemnity of life. But, beyond this, our Lord gives us lessons about pain—pain, that stern and strange mystery which follows hard upon the steps of every one of us throughout life, with which, sooner or later, we each of us become familiar, of which, left to ourselves, we know and even can guess so little.

¶ Do not complain of suffering; it teaches you to succour others.[1]

¶ Depend upon it, patient, cheerful acceptance of suffering is a great force which achieves more than many active energies that command the attention of mankind. To take one single instance from the history of this country, how vast has been the effect of the closing scenes of the life of King Charles the First. Had he conquered in his struggle with the Parliament, the English Revolution would have been only deferred. Had he died quietly in his bed, whether in exile or as the occupant of a phantom throne, such as at one time after his great defeat his enemies would still have been content to leave him, he would have lived in history as a monarch who had endeavoured to exaggerate the prerogative and to defend the exaggeration, and who, happily, had failed; and the political and religious history of England might—nay, would—have been widely different. But whatever the mistakes of his earlier life, his last sufferings were covered with a robe of moral glory—the glory of Christian patience. That long imprisonment, borne with such unvarying patient dignity—that refusal at the last to make concessions which did violence to his conscience, but which certainly might have saved his life—above all, that last

[1] *Golden Thoughts of Carmen Sylva*, 35.

tragedy at Whitehall, the most tragic, perhaps, all things considered, in the history of our country, when, as the old poet Marvell says,—

> He nothing common did or mean
> Upon that memorable scene;
> But with his keener eye
> The axe's edge did try,
> Nor Heaven invoked, with vulgar spite,
> To vindicate his helpless right,
> But bowed his comely head
> Down, as upon a bed,
> While his last thoughts were, as we know,
> Turned to the cross, and his last words, "I go
> From a corruptible crown to
> An incorruptible,"—

here was the real secret of the Restoration which followed—here the moral force which, in the end, saved by ennobling the English monarchy.[1]

¶ It is a tremendous moment when first one is called upon to join the great army of those who suffer. That vast world of love and pain opens suddenly to admit us one by one within its fortress. We are afraid to enter into the land, yet you will, I know, feel how high is the call. It is as a trumpet speaking to us, that cries aloud—"It is your turn—endure." Play your part. As they endured before you, so now, close up the ranks—be patient and strong as they were. Since Christ, this world of pain is no accident untoward or sinister, but a lawful department of life, with experiences, interests, adventures, hopes, delights, secrets of its own. These are all thrown open to us as we pass within the gates—things that we could never learn or know or see, so long as we were well.

God help you to walk through this world now opened to you as through a kingdom, regal, royal, and wide and glorious.[2]

3. We suffer in mind, we suffer in body, we suffer in soul.

(1) *We suffer in mind.*—From the point of view of religion there is the suffering of doubt, which comes at times like a cloud between almost every Christian and God. But we suffer not only from doubt, but from fears—fears whether we shall persevere, fears whether we can stand against the storm of trial and tempta-

[1] Canon H. P. Liddon.

[2] Canon Scott Holland, in a letter to Romanes, in *Life and Letters of George John Romanes*, 284.

tion, fears, perhaps, whether we are even now in the narrow way We suffer from perplexity, from the difficulty of deciding our duty in the many questions which come before us. And we suffer in mind lastly, and perhaps most often, in what may be called the "worries" of life; the irritations, the trifling troubles of every day—trifles in themselves, and each one easy to be borne if it stood alone; but coming so continually, coming so thickly, the worries of life often seem to overwhelm us.

We turn to our Lord and we follow Him through His whole life of sorrow and suffering, but we find that He seems to be always so calm—with Him there is no doubt, no perplexity, no fear, no worry. There is one scene in our Lord's life which seems to he the climax of the concentrated suffering of His mind—that time, between twelve and three upon Good Friday, when He hung upon the Cross, doing penance for the sin of the world, and darkness rolled, not only around His Cross, hiding from sight the light of day, but into His very soul, and extorted from Him that one cry of complaint, the only one in His whole life, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Once only in His life does our Lord reveal to us the sufferings of His mind.

¶ On reading his correspondence, some may accuse him of indicating too strongly his loneliness and passionate desire of sympathy; they may call his fancies diseased, his complaints unmanly, and his transient doubts unchristian. But his faithlessness was but momentary: only the man who can become at one with Frederick Robertson's strange and manifold character, and can realize as he did the agony and sin of the world,—only the man who can feel the deepest pain, and the highest joy, as Robertson could have felt them—has either the right or the capability of judging him. Doubts did cross his mind, but they passed over it as clouds across the sun. The glowing heart which lay behind soon dissipated them by its warmth.

With regard to his passionate desires and his complaint, they were human, and would have been humanly wrong in him only if he had allowed them to gain predominance over his will, righteously bent all through his life, not on their extinction, but on their subjugation. The untroubled heart is not the deepest, the stern heart not the noblest, the heart which crushes all expression of its pain not that which can produce the most delicate sympathy, the most manifold teaching, or speak so as to give the greatest consolation. Had not Robertson often suffered, and suffered so much as to be unable sometimes to suppress a cry, his sermons

would never have been the deep source of comfort and of inspiration which they have proved to thousands. The very knowledge that one who worked out the voyage of his life so truly and so firmly could so suffer and so declare his suffering, is calculated to console and strengthen many who endure partially his pain and loneliness, but who have not, as yet, resisted so victoriously; whose temperament is morbid, but who have not, as yet, subdued it to the loving and healthy cheerfulness of his Christian action.[1]

(2) *We have to suffer in body*, through sickness or accident. This frame of earth in which we tabernacle during our sojourn in this world, how frail it is! how full of weakness and of pain! And yet, even here, in the majority of cases, we can trace our pain or sickness to our own fault, to the breaking of some law of health, very likely to our luxury of life, or our gluttony, or love of ease, or the pursuit of pleasure.

¶ It may be pointed out with irresistible force that suffering can be traced, often at a long interval, in some cases to sin, and that it is simply one of the wholesome sanctions of law. We are firmly convinced that we live in a moral universe, and by that we mean in a state where it will be made pleasant to do what is right, and very unpleasant to do what is wrong, at least in physical affairs. If one play the fool and slap Nature in the face, that power will take up the quarrel and pursue it to the end with the man and his descendants till she has obtained complete satisfaction. If one make a covenant with Nature and keep her laws loyally, this power will remember him for good, and his children after him, opening her hand and blessing them with health and strength. With her saving judgments and her abundant mercies, Nature fences up the way of life that we may be induced to walk therein with steadfast step. And if any one break through the hedge, it is good that he suffer; and if it be that its actual transgressor do not pay all the debt, but that the innocent must share his liability, this is only the inevitable consequence of the solidarity of the family and the race. None can interfere between the sinner and his penalty, and we can even see that it is well none should, for in so far as one accepts his chastisement with a right mind the pain leaves peace behind.[2]

(3) And then, lastly, there is the *suffering of the human soul*; the suffering in our affections—the keenest, the deepest, the hardest of all to bear! And again we see that this comes so often

[1] S. A. Brooke, *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 473.

[2] J. Watson, *The Potter's Wheel*, 140.

through our own sin; so often we have to suffer in our affections, because our affections have been set on that which is not lawfully within our reach, that which has been forbidden to us by the law of God.

But, whether it be from our own fault, or from those many, many heart-wrenchings which come through love, even in right affections, in right relationships—the sorrows, the pains of husband or wife at the suffering or perhaps sin of the other; the pains (what greater?) of the mother weeping over her erring, wayward, sinful child—all these sufferings of the human soul we find in their fulness throughout our Lord's life, and reaching their culminating point upon the Cross. For throughout His life He suffered, "being grieved at the hardness of men's hearts." He suffered in seeing those for whom He had come to die refuse His proffered grace and turn away from His words of love.

¶ It goes without proving that no one has ever so affected our race for weal as our Master, and that the spring of this salvation is in Himself. Partly it is His example of holy living, and partly it is His Gospel of Divine Truth, but a white marble Christ had not touched the human heart, or loosed the bands of sin. It is the Crucified, in the unutterable pathos of His Passion and Death, who has overcome and gotten unto Himself the victory. Because it appears that God also is in the tragedy of life, and in the heart of its mystery. When one enters the dimness of a foreign cathedral, he sees nothing clearly for a while, save that there is a light from the Eastern window, and it is shining over a figure raised high above the choir. As one's eyes grow accustomed to the gloom, he identifies the Crucifix, repeated in every side chapel, and marks that to this Sufferer all kneel in their trouble, and are comforted. From age to age the shadow hangs heavy on life and men walk softly in the holy place, but ever the Crucifix faces them, and they are drawn to His feet and goodness by the invitation of the pierced hands.

Had one lived in Jesus' day and realized His excellence, the Cross would have been an almost insuperable offence to faith. Why should He have had a crown of thorns? Had the veil been lifted from the future, and had one seen the salvation flowing from the five wounds of the Redeemer, then he had been comforted and content. No one then imagined that through the mystery of the Lord's Passion so great a blessing was to come on all ages, for none had entered into the secret of suffering. To-day we are perplexed by the Passion, which is not now concentrated like a

bitter essence in the Cup of a Divine Person, but is distributed in the earthly vessels of ordinary people, and we stand aghast at the lot of the victims. Were our vision purged and power given us to detect spiritual effects, then we would understand, and cease to complain. We would see the hard crust of human nature broken up, and the fountain of fine emotion unsealed; the subtle sins which sap the vigour of character eliminated, and the unconscious virtues brought to bloom. Before the widespread, silent, searching appeal of the suffering, each in his appointed place, the heart of the race grows tender and opens its door to goodness.[1]

It was the Sea of Sorrow; and I stood
At midnight on the shore. The heavy skies
Hung dark above; the voice of them that wept
Was heard upon the waters, and the chill,
Sad going of a midnight wind, which stirred
No wave thereon. And I was there alone
To face that dreadful sea: I felt the cold
And deathly waters touch my feet, and drew
A little back, and shuddered. Yet I knew
That all who follow Christ must suffer here.
"Master," I said, with trembling, in the night,
With voice that none but *He* would note or know,
So hoarse and weak—"O Master, bid me come!
If on these woeful waters I must walk,
Then let me hear thy voice thereon, that so
I may not die, before I reach Thy feet,
Of loneliness and fear."
I listened there,
With breathless longing by that solemn sea,
Till through the curtains of the night I heard
His own voice calling me—that voice which draws
His children through the flood and through the fire
To kiss His feet; and at the Master's word
I left the shore, forth walking on the dim
And untried waters, there to follow Him
Who called me, and there to see His face.[2]

[1] J. Watson, *The Potter's Wheel*, 150.
[2] B. M., *The Sea of Sorrow*.

The Ethics of the Atonement.

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THE ETHICS OF THE ATONEMENT.

Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness.—1 Pet. ii. 24.

THERE is no subject so surrounded with difficulty and so fruitful of misrepresentation as the one which Passion Sunday suggests —the Atonement effected for us by Christ on the Cross. No thoughtful man can fail to be struck by the intense moral difficulties which its ordinary and naked presentment involves, and even when he has forced his way beyond them to some more rational standpoint, he still sees only a little light that is ever shading into mysterious darkness. If there is any subject which demands in a Christian teacher reverence and modesty, and a profound conviction that he "knows in part," and that "he sees through a glass darkly," it is surely this. At the best our standpoint of knowledge is like a little island floating in a sea of mystery.

There are many devout and intelligent Christians to whom it no longer appeals. They may still hold it as an article of their creed, but it is no longer the vital centre of their faith. It is at best a profound mystery, which they must accept but can never hope to understand.

Yet, as we read the New Testament, we feel that to the first Christians the Atonement was not a puzzle, but a revelation. To Paul and John and Peter it was not an intellectual fog, but a glorious flood of light cast upon the fundamental facts of life. The Word of the Cross might be a stumbling-block to the Jew, and folly to the Greek; but to them it was "the power of God and the wisdom of God."

This thought penetrates the First Epistle of Peter. It will out, even when we least expect it, even when to minds void of Christian experience it would seem to mar the force of his argu-

ment. "It is better," he cries, "if the will of God should so will, that ye suffer for well-doing." Why? Because Christ gave you the great example? There surely is the supreme motive for Christians. But no. He cannot gaze at the Cross and speak thus. "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." There is the paradox of the Christian life. The punishment of Jesus became the power of Christian patience just at the point where there is no comparison between His sufferings and ours. More remarkable still is the passage out of which our text is taken. Here there can be no question that in the humility and patience of the Master the Apostle sees a motive for the endurance of the servant. "Because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps." But as though taught by instinct that such an appeal was utterly inadequate when addressed by a Christian pastor to children of the Resurrection, he immediately breaks out into those grand sentences, every syllable of which is redolent of the power of the atoning Sacrifice and breathes the merit of the vicarious Death. "Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed."

¶ When St. Peter wrote, "Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness," this was not the testimony of a person in a distant age, who never knew our Lord; St. Peter said this of one with whom he had lived, whose words he had noted, and with whom he had been in daily intercourse and communion. And yet what a difficult, what a sharp and trying test this for such supernatural pretensions! To say of one person that His death was an atonement for the sins of the world, that He bore them in His own body on the cross, was to assert a profound and awful mystery respecting Him, because it is saying that the whole world was saved by His death; but to say this of one whom he had lived with and known—this is what we have no example of except in the testimony of the Apostles to Christ.[1]

The doctrine is the doctrine of vicarious suffering. Now in considering the doctrine of vicarious suffering it is important to remember three things.

[1] J. B. Mozley.

(1) *The vicarious suffering of Christ is not an isolated fact.*—Below the surface of human life lies the great universal fact of vicarious suffering, "not a dogmatic but an experimental truth." All true service for men involves the bearing of the sins of men, not in the same sense as that in which Christ bore them, but in a sense that helps us to understand the meaning of His suffering.

(2) *The vicarious suffering of Christ must not be separated from its purpose*—that we, being dead unto sins, should live unto righteousness. The ultimate efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ depends on what it does *in* us. The old hymn is right—"He died to make us good."

(3) *Only through suffering do we learn the meaning of His suffering.*—Slaves bearing ill-usage patiently will by the mysterious power of sympathy learn to see more clearly into the mystery of redemption than the subtlest theologian who has not suffered. The deep truths of Is. liii. were wrung from the heart of the nation as it groaned under the captivity of Babylon, and St. Paul's knowledge of the meaning of the death of Christ was won on the same battlefield—"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. vi. 17). Christianity is stamped with the image of the Cross, and the whole life of each true Christian has something of the form and look of Christ crucified.

I.

The Vicarious Suffering.

"Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree."

1. Let us first of all try to understand St. Peter's language. He has here four remarkable phrases.

(1) *His own self.*—Christ did not employ any one else to accomplish the great work of our redemption; He did it Himself, in His own proper person. The priest of old brought a substitute, and it was a lamb. He struck the knife and the warm blood flowed, but our Lord Jesus Christ had no substitute for Himself. He "his own self bare our sins." "O thou priest of God! the pangs are to be thine own pangs; the knife must reach thine own heart; no lamb for thee, thou art thyself the Lamb; the blood

which streams at thy feet must be thine own blood; wounds there must be, but they must be wounds in thine own flesh."

¶ A little girl brought me half a sovereign for missions. "Is this all from yourself?" I asked. Pointing to her heart, she said, "Yes, it is all from my own very self." So St. Peter's words mean, Christ did bear our sins really and truly; He bore them all alone; He had no rival, or partner, or substitute. When the king travels, the newspapers sometimes tell us that Mr. So-and-so, the superintendent of the line, drove the engine himself. The word *himself* shows that he did then in person what he usually does by the hand of his servants.[1]

(2) *Bare our sins.*—The word rendered "bare" has a singular fulness of significance; it is a sacrificial term, constantly used in the Septuagint for offering sacrifice: here it includes two meanings. Our Lord took up our sins, and in His own body which He offered on the cross He expiated them. It must also be noted that when He took up our sins, He took them away, enabling us to be rid of them.

¶ If we examine Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, we shall find four senses in which the words "bearing sin," are used: First, *representation*; second, *identification*; third, *substitution*; and fourth, *satisfaction.* If we take those four conceptions—representation—one standing as a representative before God; identification—one being made identical with those he represents; substitution—one substituted in the place or stead of others; and satisfaction—the furnishing of a satisfying atonement in behalf of others,—we have the scope of the meaning of these words.[2]

(3) *In His body.*—That body so purely born, which must have been a fair casket for the holy jewel it contained; which in the Jordan waters was first identified in outward seeming with the weight of human sin, though in itself without sin; which was the very shrine and home of God, who had prepared it for Him; which was the vehicle for so many blessed words and deeds of ministry—*that* body was made a sin-offering, and, so to speak, was burnt in fire without the camp, as the bodies of the bulls and goats under the Levitical law.

¶ The depth, the fulness, the perfection, of His Being and of His character endowed Him with capacities for suffering which

[1] James Wells, *Bible Echoes*, 138.

[2] A. T. Pierson, *The Hopes of the Gospel*, 87.

transcend all our most powerful imaginings. We can reach only imperfect, but still very significant, ideas of what He consciously realized in the Crucifixion. So weak are our powers that great injury stupefies the senses to the pain belonging to it. His perfection of mind would support the sense of pain and intensify it. And not only so, but every part of His Being would be quick, because of His fulness of life, to see and feel all that was contained within the act of men to Him. The pains of the flesh would not so absorb *His* mind that He could not see and feel also the meaning of all that He endured in His body on the tree. Clear before Him would stand out the hate, the malice, the wrong of His murderers. In the pain of the thorns He would be conscious of and would feel the cruel mockery of that shameful act. When His sensitive frame was pierced by the iron nails and racked with the anguish of hanging on the tree He would in this feel with equal reality the moral state of those who inflicted this upon His body. And as, with that penetrating vision which enabled Him to know what was in man, He looked through the present moral state of His murderers He would see the developments of sin which had built up their evil characters; all the several acts of disobedience and wickedness which had gone to fashion men who would murder the Just One stood out with vivid distinctness. Back beyond the present generation He would see the sins of their fathers, sins whose force lived in their degenerate offspring. A long line of ages of human sin, rank beyond rank, stretching back even to the flood and beyond it to fair Eden's garden, where man first ate the forbidden fruit. All would be seen and felt in and under the nails which fixed Him to the tree. He would read and realize also in the acts of the immediate instruments of His death the moral state of the teeming millions of living sinners, east and west and north and south. And as all this sin would be seen in its past and present, so also would the latent possibilities in it for the future pass before Him. He would see in the sins of His crucifiers those sins, the very same sins, which still have existence after nineteen centuries of grace—*our* sins. And knowing, as He alone could know, the dire evils linked everlastingly to all departure from right, He would behold the destined end of sin, if left to work its way—death and misery, hell and anguish—scenes such that only infinite strength of soul could enable Him to look upon them. His all-powerful mind measured this mass of moral corruption; His infinitely pure and infinitely sensitive moral nature felt its terrible turpitude; His love, all-embracing, was pained by the wrong of it; His soul filled with suffering pity at the prospect of its dark issues. That which to us is, at best, but a dim

conception in idea, was to Him a most terrible and real experience; "Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree."[1]

(4) *Upon the tree.*—The word for "tree" used here is also used twice in Acts (v. 30, x. 39) by St. Peter for the cross. Its use in Gal. iii. 13 is due to the Septuagint of Deut. xxi. 23. "Upon the tree" is a pregnant construction. He bore our sins *up to and upon* the tree. Irenaeus speaks of Christ as "remedying the disobedience in the matter of the tree of knowledge by the obedience of the tree of Calvary." And we think of the "tree of life" of Rev. xxii. 2, whose leaves were for the healing of the nations.

¶ There are three great trees of the Bible, towering above all other trees, as the cedars of Lebanon tower above the humble shrubs. These are the tree of life in Eden, the tree of death on Calvary, and the tree of life in heaven. The first is the tree for the sinless, the second is the tree for the sinful, and the third is the tree for the saved in glory. We are neither sinless nor saints in glory, and therefore *the* tree for us is the tree on Calvary. Notice that St. Peter calls it simply the tree. A family have been promised a Christmas-tree by a friend. All their talk for weeks beforehand is about the tree, just as if there were no other tree in the world for them. One day a cart with a nodding fir-tree is seen approaching the house. They rush in and shout, "Oh, mother, the tree has come!" And so the Apostle says, "the tree." No Christian can mistake it. It is the tree of trees, the prince of trees for us.[2]

2. Now in what sense can it be truly said that Christ bore our sins as a burden? It cannot mean that He bore the guilt of our sin, for guilt is by its very nature inextricably attached to the sinner, and cannot be transferred; no one else can be guilty of the sin which I have committed. Nor can it mean that He bore the punishment of our sin; for punishment, likewise, can attach only to the one who is guilty of the sin. Another may suffer for my sin, but his suffering cannot be called punishment. In what sense, then, could Christ bear our sins?

(1) *He bore them by sympathy.*—A good mother once heard that her only son had done a deed of shame. The evil news caused her intense agony, her hair soon grew grey, health and joy forsook her, and soon she was brought down in sorrow to the grave. She bore her son's sin by sympathy. It caused her such

[1] R. Vaughan. [2] James Wells, *Bible Echoes*, 145.

grief, because she was so near him, and loved him so fondly. If one sin, or rather that small part of one sin we can know on earth, be such an awful burden, what must it have been to bear the sins of us all? What bounds can be set to "the unknown agonies" of Christ, who has made Himself one with us sinners? Let Gethsemane and its bloody sweat, let the cross and its pains explain these words, "Who bare our sins."

(2) *Christ also bore our sins by sacrifice and substitution.*—The whole Bible is filled with this truth, and the names of Jesus help us to understand it. He is "the Lamb of God," upon whom the Lord hath laid the iniquities of us all. The Jew laid his hand upon the head of the lamb, and confessed his sins. The lamb then in a type had the burden of the Jew's sins laid upon it, and bare them by being offered as a sacrifice.

¶ In Dr. Bainbridge's *Around The World: Tour of Christian Missions*, there is a curiously interesting and suggestive incident. When in his journey he had reached Tokio, Japan, intending to remain there some little time, he was waited upon one morning by an official, with this singular inquiry, "Who stands for you?" Supposing it to be a question of passports, he presented his, but that was not what was wanted. He then offered some letters of introduction he had, but they also were unsatisfactory, and the question was repeated, "Who stands for you?" It was finally explained that there was an ordinance in that city to the effect that no foreigner could take up his residence there for any length of time, unless he provided himself with a "substitute." And as a matter of fact there were natives who hired themselves out to foreigners for this purpose. If the foreigner transgressed any law the substitute suffered the penalty for it. Even if the penalty were death, the substitute suffered death. Dr. Bainbridge secured a substitute, and was thereafter permitted to remain in peace and security as long as he chose.

II.

The Ethical Purpose of the Suffering.

"That we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness."

What was the object of Christ's death? Why did He come and live on earth, and die, and rise again? This may seem

a very elementary question, but it is really an all-important one. Our answer to it will colour, if not determine, our theory of atonement. Why, then, did Christ die? You would probably answer, offhand, that Christ died to save men. And you would be right, provided you used that word "save" in the right sense. What does "save" mean? "Salvation," "save," are great words which have been used so much that, like worn coins, the original sharpness of their meaning has been almost rubbed away. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes would say they needed "depolarising." To the ordinary "man in the pew," salvation too often means simply "safety." To be saved is to be "safe." A saved man is a man who has got off the just punishment of his sins, who will escape hell and go to heaven when he dies; and this because he has accepted some mysterious saving work that Christ wrought for him, and instead of him, on the cross. But that is not the New Testament idea of salvation. "To save," in the New Testament, means to make whole and sound. When a sick man is cured he is said to be "saved"; that is, made well and healthy. To be saved, in the spiritual sense, means to become morally sound, morally healthy, morally well. The idea it conveys is emphatically ethical. In New Testament language, a saved man is a good man, or a man who is on the way to becoming good.

1. *Having died unto sins.*—Every Christian is like Christ. He was born to die for our sins; and we are born again to die to sin. Our death to sin is like His death for sin; our new life is like His new life when He rose from the grave. Until we have died to sin, we have not begun really to live. We live truly only when we live together with Him.

¶ "Dead to sins." What a change it speaks of! Offer gold to a corpse. The man may have been a miser all his lifetime, but his eye glistens not now at the sight of the yellow heaps. Place before him the delicacies of the table; he needs them not. Sound in his ear the sweetest strains that the genius of the musician ever gave birth to; they do not touch a single responsive chord; they float by unnoticed, uncared for, unheard.[1]

¶ A fellow-student, who was a Jew by birth, once gave me the story of his life. By reading the New Testament he was convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah promised to

[1] G. Calthrop, *Pulpit Recollections*, 141.

his fathers. He was converted, forsook the synagogue, and was baptized. His parents were shocked, legally disowned and disinherited him, held him as a dead man, and went the length of having a form of burial, and a funeral service over what passed as his coffin. By his conversion he became dead to Judaism, and alive unto Christianity. He was dead to Judaism every way; in law, in love, in life. He was dead in law, for he had lost all his lawful rights as a Jew and the son of a Jew, and Judaism could no longer claim him as its own; he was dead also in love, for his affections had entirely changed, and their love for him was also clean gone; he was dead also in life, for Judaism was as a dead thing to him, and he to Judaism. What cared he for their phylacteries, and new moons, and carnal ordinances? He gloried only in the cross of Christ, by which Judaism was crucified unto him, and he unto Judaism. But he was alive unto Christianity, for he had devoted himself to the work of Christ. On the day of his conversion he died as a Jew, and began to live as a Christian.[1]

2. St. Peter's phrase is in the plural: "dead to *sins*"—it is not "sin"; and this is even better yet, and more gracious and more satisfying to the soul. The difference between "sins" in the plural and "sin" in the singular may be stated thus: "Sin" refers to our sinful nature, the sin *in* which and *into* which we were born, while "sins" refers to the consequences or fruits of that nature in the actual transgressions of our lives. How wonderful, therefore, that the atonement of Christ covers not only our sin but our sins, that in Him we are not only dead to sin in our nature but dead to sins in our everyday life.

¶ What we mostly fail to understand is the measure and extent to which that sacrifice of Christ has to be made practically potent to enable us to cease from sin in its activities, its determinations, its intentions, and in the knowledge of it. We were intended by God to cease from sin. And why? Because, as the Apostle says, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind"; that is, once for all put on the armour which you have given to you now by God—the mind and purpose and determination—and you shall be enabled, by arming yourself with this determination—which is not merely a will, but a reasonable ground of expectation—to cease from sin, as your Saviour, Christ, hath ceased from sin. That it is not an absolute deliverance I affirm; that it is not

[1] James Wells, *Bible Echoes*, 147.

an absolute deliverance that I will affirm to the last breath I draw in this life, for I think I should dishonour my Lord if I were to say I had ever seen a man whom I could speak of as being altogether without sin. I remember (and I speak it tenderly but firmly) some who have claimed to be free from sin, and my only utterance in my heart has been, "God help me if I had no better Christianity than yours; if I could not find One to look at with greater admiration, I would hardly care to leave this world." But because we yearn in vain after perfection, it does not follow that we need not, and ought not, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, to be getting nearer to Christ now, and be more and more reflecting His image. Because we cannot attain to the absolutely perfect is the very reason why we should seek to attain the relatively perfect, and have the ambition of being conformed to that Perfect One, that we may live according to His example, and tread in His steps. Is there nothing beyond the judicial in ch. iii. v. 18—"That he might bring us to God"? Thanks be to God, there *is* something more than the substitutionary, the representative, the vicarious; there is the drawing up until every faculty of the being is made to approach to God, until we draw nigh to God; and you cannot draw nigh to God except as being "pure in heart"; and the measure of the vision is exactly as we are pure in heart.[1]

¶ After the sins of the past have been blotted out, is it necessary to the perpetuity of atoning grace that others shall perpetually take their place? A simple illustration may perhaps show the unreasonableness of this thought. Sins spring from sin, as the eruptions on the skin of a patient suffering from measles or scarlet fever spring from the disease. Now suppose the eruption on the surface were soothed and relieved by medical skill, would this be full healing, even should it be continually repeated and perfectly performed? Surely not. While caring for the effects of the disease, true medical science always aims, as we know, at counteracting the exciting cause of the illness; so our Lord's atoning work, while making provision for the putting away of sins in forgiveness as fast as they appear and are presented to Him in true repentance by the sin-sick Christian, aims at the healing of the disease, and the raising up of a perfectly healthy organism.[2]

3. *Might live unto righteousness.*—The New Testament writers are full of salvation as a realized, personal experience. They

[1] Prebendary Webb-Peploe in *The Keswick Week*, 1899, p. 86.
[2] Helen B. Harris, *Heart Purity*, 62.

are men who have met Christ, and to whom He has made all the difference. The moral and spiritual change they have experienced is so great that it baffles description. Out of his own experience St. Paul says: "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold they are become new." They try to describe it by striking metaphors, as a passing from bondage to freedom, from darkness to light, from death to life. And they rightly attribute it to Christ—especially to His death, or rather not so much to His death as to Him dying—Christ crucified.

¶ It is one thing to tell men that Christ died; it is quite another to preach, as St. Peter did, the Death of Christ. It is one thing to declare that by His Cross He taught His brethren and inspired to suffer and to die; it is quite another to proclaim with St. Paul that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It is one thing for the shepherd to be ready, if need so require, to bleed for the flock; it is quite another to say, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." That, and that alone, is the secret of a life not only like Christ, but in Christ. The Christian life—I cannot begin it unless I am buried with Him by baptism unto death; I cannot continue it unless each closing day it is brought beneath the covering of His finished work, to be within Himself made pure; I cannot end it save as the chief of sinners, pleading not my righteousness, but His, who will put into my story what He did. But when my faith looks up to my crucified Saviour, I begin to be a disciple and in my mouth He puts this new song: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And I follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.[1]

[1] J. G. Simpson, *Christian Ideals*, 277.

Depths of Mercy.

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Depths of Mercy.

Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; . . . he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, . . . who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.—1 Pet. iii. 18–22.

1. St. Peter's Epistle might be called the Epistle of exhortation. It is a persuasive plea for a lofty, spiritual character. In this letter, the courageous though impetuous Peter, the practical Apostle, shows that he was capable of lofty flights, and that his conception of the Christian character was all-comprehensive and complete. To him the new man in Christ Jesus was no weakling, but a man of many parts, strength, and beauty. Again and again in this chapter he makes us feel that to him the salient feature of Christ's life was His suffering. "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" is the phrase that must occur to any one who reads this section with care. Then in many ways St. Peter urges his readers and hearers to express the same Divine quality. That example of God in Christ must be followed by the disciple. The disciple must not be surprised when in the growth of holiness and zeal for service there occur distressing and disheartening experiences. At such times the disciple must think of his Lord. Then he will recall incidents in that life which disclose the sufferings inseparable from that high following. This is the unity of purpose running through all the sentences of the paragraph.

¶ The capacity of some people to bear pain, misfortune, disappointment, without breaking down, may be the most powerful agency for convincing others of the reality and value of the Christian life and it may be God's way of touching other hearts. When they told our Lord that Lazarus was ill He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son

of God may be glorified thereby." If that was the purpose of Lazarus' sickness it may be the purpose and explanation of your present trouble. Then it is worth bearing, and the man who believes that the chief end of life is to glorify God will not shrink from the course of pain. The man who would follow Christ must be willing, and even eager, to take on his own blameless shoulders the blame which belongs to another. He must be willing to open his heart to the sufferings that fall on other lives. He must be willing, in order to save another and to serve him, to become involved in the consequences of his wrong-doing. He must be willing, like the hero in Ralph Connor's *Prospector*, to put himself into dangerous and equivocal positions, to endure suspicion and blame which rightly belong to another, in order that he may shield and save. There are still innumerable opportunities for the innocent to suffer with the guilty and for them, and the man who refuses to take them, who will shut the sufferings and sins of the world from his heart, who says, let us have a good time of comfort and ease, or of gaiety and pleasure, who says, the affairs of the people about me are no concern of mine, who makes it the first business of his life to avoid trouble and misunderstanding, is a stranger to the spirit of Christ. As long as there is suffering in the world, and sin, *the Christian must share it.* "Hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps."[1]

2. The Apostle has been speaking of the suffering patience of Christ, and urges the example of it upon his readers. But he shows that it was more than an example. It was an exhibition of redeeming power; it was a sacrifice for sins. Its purpose was nothing less than to bring mankind to the feet of God by the greatness of Divine love. Starting from a widespread belief in the extent of the Messiah's work as held among the Jews, or from the direct teaching of his Master after His return from the grave, he speaks of that wider work in the gracious carrying of the great redemptive message into the under-world.

¶ I have watched an insect making its way with some earnest purpose along the highway. I have watched its movements so long that I have become much interested in the success of its errand. I have seen when a loaded cart was coming up, whose wheel would have crushed the creature in an instant. I have laid a twig across its path, and compelled it to turn aside. Oh, how it stormed and fretted against my interference: if it could communi-

[1] Charles Brown, *Trial and Triumph*, 94.

cate with its kind, it would have a tale of hardship to recount that night, of some unknown and adverse power that stopped its progress and overturned its plans. Conceive, now, that intelligence should be communicated to that tiny being, and it should discover that another being, immeasurably raised above its comprehension, had in compassion saved it from death![1]

I.

Suffering on Earth.

"Christ also suffered for sins once."

1. *The death of Christ was the outward expression of His mind and spirit.*—It was not so much anything done to Him by wicked men or by God, as His own doing, a sacred act, the greatest of His works, and the profoundest of His parables. This act gave Him scope to show more clearly than He could in any other way all He was, and all He thought, felt, and believed. The Cross is the fullest exposition of the mind of Christ. As an expression of the world's estimate of Jesus, Calvary was the verdict of ignorance, passion, and prejudice. It was a judgment to be repented of in fuller light. But think of Calvary as Christ's judgment of the world! "Now is the judgment of this world." The Cross is Christ's verdict on the world, His sentence of death on the life that is born of the flesh.

¶ The redemptive suffering of Jesus is the suffering of His heart. The virtue of His Passion lay in the spirit that He manifested. The human and material environment of the Master's death has dominated our thought too much. I do not think that the material incidents of Gethsemane and Calvary were essential to our redemption. I believe that if Christ had never been betrayed by one of the twelve, He would still have died for our sins. I believe that if He had never suffered the brutal accompaniments of mockery and blasphemy, and the loathsome coarseness of contemptible men, He would still have died for our sins. I believe that if He had never been crucified, He would still have died for our sins. I believe that if He had finished His ministry in public acclamation, instead of public contempt, He would still have passed into outer darkness, into an unthinkable loneliness, into a terrible midnight of spiritual forsakenness and abandon-

[1] W. Arnot, *The Anchor of the Soul*, 211.

ment. He came to die, came to pass into the night which is "the wages of sin," and what we men did was to add to His death the pangs of contempt and crucifixion.[1]

2. *In the suffering of Christ, God Himself suffered.*—We behold Him in the Son of Man. We see the wounds of love in His hands and feet and side. This message also gives suffering a glory which transforms and exalts it. Since suffering is love's highest privilege, clearly the Cross gives us the secret of much beauty and joy in the suffering life of earth. It is true that the Cross does not sanction wanton suffering. Not a jot of the passion of the Christ was without its end, not a pang of His travail shall be without its satisfying fruit. It is still a privilege to alleviate human suffering wherever we can, even as Christ did when He healed the sick, and fed the multitude, and restored the dead to the mourners. But there is suffering which is all-beautiful, and becomes holy and wonderful in the light which is shed upon it from the Cross. The suffering which is the throbbing pulse of love is not an evil, but a good. It brings us into mystical relation with the mystery of God in His atoning Son. Let us not lament, if we suffer for love's sake. Wearing our crown of thorns, let us stand before the cross, and the music of the Divine love will give us a blessedness which is known only when love is glorified with wounded hands and feet.

¶ Would a mother think her love satisfied if she did not, and could not, suffer with her suffering child? Nay, she would consider herself disgraced by her insensibility. Even if she but imagined herself too insensible, she would suffer pangs because of the imagined inertness and inadequateness of her love. If she were offered the gift of insensibility, the power of looking without a pang on her loved one's suffering, not for worlds would she accept such immunity. And if she were told that God possessed such immunity, her mother-heart of suffering love would know itself greater than such a God. Yet the eternal God says: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." The glory of God is His love. The glory of His love is that it is life. The glory of His life of love is that for love's sake it could suffer

[1] J. H. Jowett, *The Epistles of Peter*, 140.

infinitely, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."[1]

3. *The suffering of Christ was vicarious.*—"He died, the righteous for the unrighteous." "The just for the unjust" is an outrage on civil justice, which is based on individualism; "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." But it is ground law of humanity, founded, as it is, on a community of life; "we are members one of another." The many men are one man.

¶ I saw the other day a sight which, happily, is rarer than it was—a man reeling through the street in the shamelessness of advanced drunkenness. People turned to look as he staggered past. I heard no laugh or jeer, but expressions of shame and pity on all sides. The sober felt for the drunken what he should have felt for himself; and by thus taking on them, even for a moment, a pain and a shame not their own they helped to replenish and preserve in the community that store of right feeling towards evil which is the safeguard of the unfallen and a very laver of regeneration for the sinner that repenteth. The man in the dock is sullen, defiant or indifferent, but some one in the court, mother or wife, feels for him all he should feel. As the sordid story of crime is pieced together, she burns in the fever of shame, and moans or faints as the pain of his sentence pierces her heart. The common conscience towards evil is daily repaired and strengthened by the sufferings of the just for the unjust, and a place of repentance for the guilty maintained by the sorrows of the innocent. Civil justice proceeds on the supposition that we are individuals merely, but every day's experience proves that we are only individual members of one great whole, and that both in our sins and in our sorrows we very soon come to where the individual ends and the common life begins.[2]

4. *The suffering of Christ reconciles men to God.*—As a rivulet, after its toilsome, lonely progress past moor and forest, falls into the larger current of the river, as the river, after many windings and doublings, pours itself into the sea, so the soul, after the vain struggles of self-will, is reconciled to the river of God's will, which is the river of life eternal. Reconciliation is harmony, agreement, atonement, and nothing else satisfies God or man. Punishment can never satisfy either the holiness of God or the conscience of man. The Divine holiness can be satisfied only

[1] J. Thomas, *The Mysteries of Grace*, 54.

[2] J. Morgan Gibbon, *Evangelical Heterodoxy*, 88.

with holiness, and "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." The homecoming of the prodigal quits all scores. Father and son are satisfied, and God is, in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself without reckoning their trespasses.

¶ He suffered, "that he might bring us to God." All that need be said about that gracious "bringing" is just this, that in Jesus, answering the call of His redeeming grace, men and women in countless numbers have turned their faces home, and are making their way out of the deadening bondage of sin into the "glorious liberty of the children of God."

> Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,
> The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea,
> And laden souls, by thousands meekly stealing,
> Kind Shepherd, turn their weary steps to Thee.[1]

5. *Christ identifies Himself with us in suffering.*—In our increasing grasp of the solidarity of the human race we have learned to look upon the human family as being one thing; and we know that the human family thrills throughout its wide extent under the power of this suffering of One for the many. All that you need is identification existing between the sufferers and those through whom they suffer. Well it is here. Our Lord, the Son of God, has become the Son of humanity; He has entered into that relation with the race, and with each member of the race, which a perfect community of nature involves. He is linked to all and each with the link of perfect love; and what exquisite capacities of suffering love always carries with it! He is the Head of the race, its Representative, the Second Adam. The whole race is re-gathered up in Him; and there is no possibility of identification between men like the identification that exists between the man Christ Jesus and us His brethren. It is because of the relation in which He stands to the race, that He died for us upon the Cross; and His death has all the wonderful effects which are assigned to it in Christian teaching, because it is a sorrow which is more fruitful than any other sorrow could be. I go to the Cross then, and I look to the Christ hanging there as my representative and dying that redeeming death.

¶ They preach of a great Vicarious Anguish suffered for the world. Do they not know, rather, that it was suffered in and

[1] J. H. Jowett, *The Epistles of Peter*, 142.

with it? that it was instead an Infinite Participance and Sympathy? that the anguish was in the world, and the Love came down, and tasted, and identified itself with it, making of the ultimate of pain a sublime, mysterious Rapture? That it is far more to feel the upholding touch of One who goes down into the deep waters before us, and to receive, so, some little drops that we can bear of the great Chrism, than to stand apart, safe on the sunny bank, while He passeth the flood for us, bringing it safely for our uncleansed feet for ever. That—not this—was the Pity and the Sacrifice; that is the Help and the Salvation; the Love and the Pain enfold us together; that is what the jasper and the crimson mean; the first refraction where the Divine Light falls into our denser medium of being; the foundation stone of the heavenly building. The beginning of the At-one-ment; till, through . . . the tenderer, peacefuller tints, our life passes the whole prism of its mysterious experience, and beyond the far-off violet, at last, it rarifies to receive and to transmit the full white Light of God.[1]

II.

Ministry in Hades.

"He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."

1. This declaration is like a little window through which we look into a world unknown and almost unsuspected; and what is suggested by the glimpse through the window is so strange, it involves so many extraordinary possibilities, that one can hardly wonder that many extravagant theories have been raised upon it. It was the extravagance of these theories that led St. Augustine in the beginning of the fifth century to seek for some other explanation of the text altogether; and he maintained that there is no reference in this text to what is called the *descensus ad inferos*—a descent to the shades—but that it refers simply to the historical episode of Noah preaching to those who subsequently perished by the flood. And Luther, no doubt seeing what a tremendous pile of mediæval superstition had been reared on the strength of the text, admitted St. Augustine's view; and Protestants have largely followed Luther, and have declared that the passage simply means that during the time of the flood, or just before, Jesus Christ

[1] A. D. T. Whitney.

preached to those sinful men as He preached to sinful men in the time of His Incarnation. But the reference in verse 22 to the Ascension seems to suggest that the preaching took place after Christ's death.

¶ The weighty authority of R. H. Charles may be invoked to prove that the interpretation which accepts Christ's mission to the dead fits in with our fuller knowledge of contemporary Jewish literature. It throws light on one of the darkest enigmas of the Divine justice. At the same time full justice will be done to the early Christian tradition that in some way or other Christ benefited the souls of the faithful departed. But it must be admitted that the bare statement of the Apostles' Creed asserts only that Christ's soul passed into the condition which our souls will enter at death, sanctifying every condition of human existence. Harnack writes that "the clause is too weak to maintain its ground beside the others, as equally independent and authoritative," but, as Swete says, he fails to point out in what the weakness lies, while "to us it appears to possess in a very high degree the strength which comes from primitive simplicity and a wise reserve."

Thus the consensus of theological opinion justifies the teaching of the poet of the Christian Year:

> Sleep'st Thou indeed? or is Thy spirit fled,
> At large among the dead?
> Whether in Eden bowers Thy welcome voice
> Wake Abraham to rejoice,
> Or in some drearier scene Thine eye controls
> The thronging band of souls;
> That, as Thy blood won earth, Thine agony
> Might set the shadowy realm from sin and sorrow free.[1]

2. Christ breaks through all barriers, and proclaims His Lordship in the realm of spirits. The "Keys of Hades" in the Book of Revelation serve to interpret "the proclamation to the spirits in prison." Whatever the details may mean, the central picture in the Petrine passage is the triumphant march of the crucified Jesus through the domain of Hades. He is there taking command of the keys. He has come as Lord of the citadel, and makes His proclamation as such to the spirits in ward. The Monarch has come to take possession. Just as His coming into

[1] A. E. Burn, in the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, i. 716.

our earth shook our world with a new power, so His entry into Hades shook this shadowy realm with new forces. He grasped the keys of all Hades throughout all its mysterious boundaries, and not merely of a part of it. Therefore St. Peter writes only of a fraction of the whole "proclamation" and triumph, this portion having been chosen for the enforcement of a particular lesson—the lesson of godly Noah's triumph over a turbulent and evil world. The Son of Man conquered the grave for the bodies of men, and took possession of Hades as Lord of the spirits of men. Therefore He will come to judge the quick and the dead alike. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."

¶ The most primitive, or, at least, the earliest traceable, element in the conception of the *Descensus* would seem to be the belief that Christ, having descended into the under world after His death, delivered the Old Testament saints from that necessity of being confined in Hades which was thenceforward abrogated in the case of believers, and conveyed them to the Heaven which all believers have hereafter the right to enter.[1]

3. Christ proclaimed the glad tidings of His Kingdom to those in Hades. He who came down from heaven "to seek and to save that which was lost" did not count His work over when He had finished it for the generation that then lived, or when He had laid the foundation of it for other generations thereafter; but He went also to those who had been so unhappy as to be born and to have died before He came. He went and continued His ministry among the spirits in prison. The Cross was set up, so to speak, in Hades. The promise to the penitent thief was not a promise to one; it was a promise to all who had gone before Christ and desired to know Him, who had died in His faith, in His love, but without the sight of Him;—it was a promise to all of them, that on that day He would bring rest and satisfaction to them. So we can think of Christ going there among all the dead, from Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel, down to Isaiah and Micah, and John the Baptist—to all those who had been hungering for Him, expecting and longing for Him, to the souls of the great heathen, longing for they knew not what, but surely finding at last their satisfaction in Him.

[1] Friedrich Loofs, in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, iv. 661.

¶ It is impossible to shut Christ out of any region of His universe. He has a right everywhere. Hell and destruction are open before Him. He tracks "lost" man down to the deepest and darkest cavern. Even devils could not shut their gate of flame upon Him. He is "come to seek and to save that which was lost"; and I rejoice to believe that every "lost" child of Adam shall have at least the *opportunity* of accepting Christ's mediation—that Christ's great work has been published through the universe—and that even from hell's floor of fire, clear up to heaven's loftiest pinnacle of jasper, the story of redeeming love is known in all the pomp of its simplicity, in all the omnipotence of its pathos.[1]

O the generations old,
Over whom no church-bells tolled,
Christless, lifting up blind eyes
To the silence of the skies!
For the innumerable dead
Is my soul disquieted.

Hear'st thou, O of little faith,
What to thee the mountain saith,
What is whisper'd by the trees?—
"Cast on God thy care for these;
Trust Him, if thy sight be dim:
Doubt for them is doubt of Him.

Not with hatred's undertow
Doth the Love Eternal flow;
Every chain that spirits wear
Crumbles in the breath of prayer;
And the penitent's desire
Opens every gate of fire.

Still Thy love, O Christ arisen,
Yearns to reach these souls in prison!
Through all depths of sin and loss
Drops the plummet of Thy cross!
Never yet abyss was found
Deeper than that cross could sound!"[2]

4. Can we say anything as to the result of Christ's preaching in Hades? Whatever the effect of Christ's descent into Hades was for the ungodly, it would seem that His presence gave a

[1] J. Parker, *Hidden Springs*, 119. [2] Whittier.

higher status and a more vivid consciousness of blessedness to the holy dead. This appears inevitable. The revelation of the Messiah must have been to them a revelation of the deeper meanings and glories of their immortal life. His coming would make them share in the new and splendid development of the Kingdom of God which that coming involved. In the twilight land they too were waiting for His glory, and in His redemptive presence in the might of His victory they would rise into richer life. The godly of the old dispensation would be splendidly lifted into the glory of the new. Those who had been gathered to the "bosom of Abraham" would now know the higher blessedness of "being with Christ."

¶ In his Poem, "The Everlasting Mercy," John Masefield gives the autobiography of a soul that sank to the lowest depths of sin. But Divine mercy pursued him in the vilest haunts and, in the person of a Quaker girl, hurled this appeal at the bolted door of his heart.

> Saul Kane, she said, when next you drink,
> Do me the gentleness to think
> That every drop of drink accursed
> Makes Christ within you die of thirst,
> That every dirty word you say
> Is one more flint upon his way,
> Another thorn upon his head,
> Another mock by where he tread,
> Another nail, another Cross,
> All that you are is that Christ's loss.

Resistance was useless. The bolt yielded, and the power of love conquered in the prison of his soul. And this is what he says—

> I did not think, I did not strive,
> The deep peace burnt my me alive;
> The bolted door had broken in,
> I knew that I had done with sin.
> I knew that Christ had given me birth,
> To brother all the souls of earth,
> And every bird and every beast
> Should share the crumbs broke at the feast.

5. Does the possibility of new opportunity beyond this world diminish the urgency for missionary effort? If you object, as

against this possible extension of mercy, that it will encourage sinners to go on as they are, in the hope of another chance by and by, the reply is that in exactly the same way you might object to the Gospel itself, that the death of Christ and pardon through His Cross is an encouragement to continue in sin that grace may abound. Men do argue that way, and St. Paul rebuked it by his solemn "God forbid."

Then it is said, if the offer of salvation is to be made to the ignorant on the other side of death, what special urgency is there for strenuous labour in the present? That is how many men have reasoned, and how many reason to-day. If the unenlightened heathen are not swept into hell, the burden of the situation is lightened, and the strain is relaxed. It is a terrific motive to conceive that the unillumined multitudes are dropping over the precipice of death into everlasting torment. And that has been the conception of many devoted followers of Christ. One writer makes the terrible declaration that three millions of the heathen and Mohammedans are dying every month, dropping over the precipice into the awful night, swept into eternity! Swept into what? If they go out with unlit minds and hearts, are they never to see the gracious countenance of the Light of Life? "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." Does this destroy the urgency for foreign missions, and will it lull the heart of the Church to sleep? One may well ask where are we if the motive of our missions and ministry is to save people from the fires of hell?

The real missionary motive is not to save from hell, but to reveal Christ: not to save from a peril, but to proclaim and create a glorious companionship. Here is the marrow of the controversy, concentrated into one pressing question: Is it of infinite moment to know Christ now?

¶ The love of Christ will always create missionaries. Raymund Lull was a gay and thoughtless courtier living a life of pleasure and of self-indulgence at the court of King James of Aragon. And one evening he was seated on his bed playing the zithern and trying to compose a song to a beautiful lady of the Court—a married lady, who rejected his addresses. While this gay, accomplished man was trying to compose the song, he thought he saw upon his right hand the crucified Saviour, and from the hands and the feet and the brow the blood was trickling down, and Christ looked at him reproachfully; he put down his zithern

and he could not compose the song. Agitated, disturbed, and conscience-stricken, he left the room. Eight days after he had forgotten the event, but he had not forgotten the song; he took the zithern again, and began to finish the song—a song of an unrequited love. And he lifted up his eyes and saw again on his right hand the crucified Saviour with the blood trickling from the hands and the feet and the brow, a reproachful look in His eyes. The zithern was put aside again and this thoughtless creature said —"That is the greatest unrequited love in all the world. Let me sing some song to that." He did not rest. He gave up his post at the Court, and became the great first missionary to the Moslems.[1]

III.

Supremacy in Heaven.

"Who is on the right hand of God."

Christ is now on the right hand of God, and angels and authorities and powers are subject to Him.

1. In Him heaven obtains its highest vision of the glory of God. The God of redemption has become the centre of the heavenly places. Love is the highest expression of God, and grace is the highest expression of love. The God that sitteth upon the throne has to be reinterpreted in the light of the "Lamb that was slain." Just as the Son of Man was the complete revelation of God upon the earth, so the ascended Christ is the complete revelation of God in heaven. The angels that looked upon the face of God in cycles past are learning anew the meaning of His glory, and ancient principalities and powers are learning from the enthroned Son the manifold wisdom of God. Once heaven rang with music to the Creator, and the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. But now the highest music of heaven is praise to the Redeemer God, the Hallelujah Chorus to the "Lamb that was slain." He has been exalted by the right hand of God to reveal the heart of God to the wondering hosts of heaven. For all heaven God is marvellously reinterpreted in the light of the atoning cross.

[1] R. F. Horton, *The Hidden God*, 61.

2. This was the fitting climax of so wonderful a career. It was not enough for Christ to conquer in the great fight, and to secure the fulfilment of His mission. He must receive a triumph. He must be crowned.

¶ In his article on Dr. Chalmers Dr. John Brown has asked us to conceive of the reception which a great and good man is bound to get in heaven. "May we not imagine," he says, "when a great and good man—a son of the morning—enters on his rest, that heaven would move itself to meet him at his coming?" Bunyan has given us a glowing description of the welcome given to Christian and Hopeful, as they drew near to the Golden City. But if heaven thus moves itself to welcome a great and good man, who shall describe the homecoming of the risen and victorious Christ? We know that the heavens resounded with song when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and the listening earth caught a faint echo of the strain. Surely the music, if not sweeter, was more exultant, when Jesus came back a Conqueror, with Calvary and the Cross behind, and the work of Redemption accomplished. Yes, angels and principalities and powers united in the shout, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." And He took His place on the throne of everlasting supremacy.

3. This was the enthronement of man. When Christ ascended on high, He brought our humanity with Him and placed it on the throne. Henceforth it is human nature at its best and purest that is triumphant and rules the universe. When we remember this, how cheerful and confident it should make us about the future. We need not fear to face life's ceaseless battle. When we remember who occupies the place of supremacy, we can say

> Some day love shall claim her own,
> Some day fuller truth be known,
> Some day right ascend the throne,
> Some sweet day.

¶ The true future of humanity lies in its realization of its glorious Head there upon the Throne, and we who know Him by faith must bring this home to others. In the wall of Constantinople still stands the gate through which the Moslem conquerors marched into the ancient Christian city which they were about to sack. The gate is walled up, and through that gate they say the Christian conqueror will enter for the Christian re-

occupation of the city. So, as with Jerusalem, where the same fact is repeated, the "Golden Gate" in each case testifies to an ever-present fear that some day Jesus Christ will conquer. To the seer in lonely Patmos, separated from his fellow-worshippers on the Lord's Day, doubtful, perhaps, about the future of the Church in a time of fierce persecution, comes the vision which in all ages has nerved the saint for witnessing and suffering, whether it be Isaiah or Ezekiel or Paul or Stephen, the vision of the invincible Sovereignty and present Glory of the Lord. Then, "what thou seest, write." And the whole Book, with its glimpses of Christian history to the end of time, turns upon that opening vision as its pivot. It is the last written revelation which the world has had of that Glory. Thus St. John's stewardship to the Church was fulfilled.[1]

[1] T. A. Gurney, *The Living Lord*, 129.

Human Anxiety and Divine Care

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Human Anxiety and Divine Care.

Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you.—1 Pet. v. 7.

1. These words follow others of great significance: "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you." The two verses taken together state this truth, that anxiety carries with it a division of faith between God and self—a lack of faith in God, proportioned to the amount of care which we refuse to cast on Him; an excess of self-confidence, proportioned to the amount which we insist on bearing ourselves. If we refuse to let God carry for us what He desires and offers to carry, pride is at the bottom of the refusal. Therefore, the Apostle says, "Humble yourselves under God's *mighty* hand. Confess the weakness of *your* hand. Do not try to carry the anxiety with your weak hand. Cast it all on Him. Believe that He cares for you, and be humbly willing that He should care for you."

2. The Revised Version has brought out a very important distinction by the substitution of "anxiety" for "care." Anxiety, according to its derivation, is that which distracts and racks the mind, and answers better to the original word, which signifies a *dividing* thing, something which distracts the heart, and separates it from God. The word "careth," on the other hand, used of God ("he careth for you"), is a different word in the original, and means *supervising* and *fostering* care, loving interest, such care as a father has for a child.

I.

Human Anxiety.

1. A famous man of letters said of the king whom he served [Louis XI.], "I have seen him and been his servant in the days

of his greatest prosperity, but never yet did I see him without uneasiness and care." Is that for kings only, or do king and subject meet at this point? Thackeray says of the world we all live in, "This is Vanity Fair, not a moral place, certainly, and not a merry one though very noisy. A man as he goes about the show will not be oppressed by his own or other people's hilarity. An episode of humour or of kindness touches or amuses him here and there, but the general impression is more melancholy than mirthful." Care would seem, then, to be a common plague, which, late or soon, begins to furrow every face; and most of us know so much of it and so little of its remedy, that it may well seem wasted labour for a man to talk to his fellows of the cure of care.

¶ Atra Cura—Black Care—was familiar to the light-hearted Roman poet. It was impossible to ride away from it; wherever the traveller went, it went with him.

> Horses! landlord, and six good pair
> To bear the old Lord back to town,
> Far from the broad lands gay with clover,
> Far from the rolling grassy down.
>
> Flog the horses, post-boys, faster;
> Let us fly like a ship before the wind,
> In the heart of these dull old country mansions
> The old Hag Care we have left behind.
>
> 'Tis all in vain,
> For close beside our sleeping master
> There sits the old black Hag again.

After all these years of Christ the hard tyranny of circumstance is unloosened. Perhaps it never pressed so heavily as of late. Every morning there rises the great army of the careworn to take up the daily toils with sinking heart. Every day competition grows more savage, and success more difficult. Every day the sensibilities and aspirations of youth are being killed by the pressure of low necessities. What is music to the man waiting for the footfall of his creditor? What is poetry or philosophy to one intent on the fateful telegram which brings word that his venture has failed? "We can live without poetry and religion and philosophy," such is the cry, "but not without food or clothing or shelter, and these are at hazard." Many of the best hearts in the world are broken by such thoughts, and even those in which life remains are well likened to houses in whose eaves the

birds of care have built their nests, and where little can be heard but their importunate croakings.[1]

2. But let us distinguish. There is a proper care, a care that is praiseworthy. The best Christians see that life is scarcely possible and certainly is not useful without some amount of pains. In fact, the chief difference between the man whose life is a noble Christian benefaction and the man whose life is a miserable heathenish failure is that the one is careful and the other is careless. In this sense, care means the diligent use of our faculties. It is the scrupulous discharge of every trust by the good steward and soldier of Jesus Christ. It gathers up the fragments that nothing may be lost. It creates industry, economy, tidiness, the maintenance of families, integrity; and these are all Christian virtues. Any lack of them dishonours God. Disorder, unthrift, uncleanliness, waste, in any house, are vices; and they all follow from carelessness. No amount of religious sentiment will justify them. Care in this sense is what distinguishes the household of a Christian family from the cabin of a barbarian. All growth in goodness, victory over temptation, conversion of bad habits, every kind of human excellence, comes by painstaking; that is, by care. A negligent or improvident Christian is a blemish in the Body of Christ, which ought to be without spot or wrinkle, clean and whole.

¶ You are living not only where you are, but away in another land where your boy is, and you cannot help thinking of the unknown dangers and temptations which may assail him; you feel them lurking like shadows in the corner, threatening you because they concern him. And that is not fault; it is life, it is love, it is motherhood. And the knowledge that you do thus care, and that his disgrace would strike you like a wound, is one of the powers which keep him back from evil. We have other relations within the narrower and wider communities in which our life has grown, but in them all the same assertion holds; and he who takes his place in Church, or town, or nation, lazily, caring only for what affects himself, and unconcerned by any public danger, is rightly marked for men's contempt. He is not half a man; for a man lives in his community; sharing its burdens, rejoicing in its successes, putting life and thought at its disposal for ends beyond his own advantage. That is how men are made, and it

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ten-Minute Sermons*, 27.

is also how the stiff world is driven forward along ways of progress. For care is one of God's chief disciplines in fashioning the character of men.[1]

3. There is also an improper care—the anxiety of the text. It clings to us as a creature of this world clings to this world. It hinders the affections when they try to rise heavenward, and drags them back. It doubts whether Christ is still near at hand and His grace sufficient. It reads the glorious promises of the Gospel with an absent mind, like some unreal legend. It murmurs fretfully, "No trial is like my trial; other troubles I could bear; this has no explanation, no profit, and turns no side of it to the sun." It grinds at every kind of work it undertakes as in a treadmill, under a taskmaster, rejoicing in no liberty, animated with no hope. All crosses are compulsory. Some cares shoot through us like shocks of neuralgic pain, making us quiver and tremble, as when great griefs concentrate their torture upon us. Other cares press with silent, leaden weights, like the dull aching of the head that drains vigour, drop by drop, out of the brain and all the drooping dependencies of nerve and limbs. The forms of the burden vary. But the heaviness of them all is the heart's distance from God. The sun is hid. There is no wide horizon, no light springing of the will, no joy to break the bondage of the law. This is earthly care, unprofitable, unreasonable, unholy care—the care that wears out men and women before their time, the care that sours and saddens God's world, the care that slowly kills the body under the name of a thousand different diseases, and is the beginning of death to the spirit. It is the care you can not, only because you will not, cast upon Him who careth for you.

¶ Brought up in the school of Presbyterian Moderatism, her [Professor Sellar's mother] piety was cheerful, humble, and reserved, and drew its strength from certain chapters of the New Testament, and its emotion from the beloved Scottish Paraphrases. These we read to her the last thing before she was left for the night, but if her maid happened to come into the room at the time, she would motion to the reader to stop, and make anxious inquiries if there were "rizzered" haddocks and other essentials for the gentlemen's breakfast. Then with a little apologetic sign

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Some of God's Ministries*, 247.

she would say, "'Let not your hearts with anxious thoughts be troubled or dismayed'—but I wish I were sure that my sons were quite comfortable!"[1]

Be not much troubled about many things,
Fear often hath no whit of substance in it,
And lives but just a minute;
While from the very snow the wheat-blade springs.
And light is like a flower,
That bursts in full leaf from the darkest hour.
And He who made the night,
Made, too, the flowery sweetness of the light.
Be it thy task, through His good grace, to win it.[2]

II.

Divine Care.

1. As already noticed, St. Peter at this point makes a significant change of word; he has spoken of our "distracting care" (a word in its etymology related to the common verb to divide), which will not suffer us to be a whole man to any one concern, but keeps us anxiously considering and forecasting risks elsewhere. But God's care has nothing of this distraction in it; He cares for each as if there were no other life under His charge, and when you meet Him it is an undivided heart that meets you. "He cares not anxiously for you."

¶ This word "careth" is a far nobler word than that translated "anxiety" (A.V. "care") in the former part of the text. I like that phrase used by Jean Ingelow, "Much thought is spent in heaven." It seems to express very largely what is meant by Divine care—"Much thought is spent in heaven" over us. This is the care that is the outcome of interest, regard, and love. Like it the care of the mother for her infant brings with it joy rather than distraction. Have you not noticed what a wonderful power such a care has to focus every emotion, every thought, and every faculty into one point? Ask the mother who cares for that little infant night and day how she views all. She will admit that the care of motherhood has its frets, doubtless, but amidst all she will indignantly deny that such a care distracts; the rather it brings into its channel every thought, every feeling,

[1] Mrs. Sellar, *Recollections and Impressions*, 235. [2] Alice Cary.

every energy. It is that which unites the whole being in one service of love. Is there any privilege to compare with such a care?[1]

¶ The old world looked upon Paradise as a place without care. It measured the majesty of the gods by their exemption from the cares of humanity. They dwelt on the top of Olympus, and rejoiced all the day in a sunshine whose cloudlessness was its carelessness—its absence of interest in the problems of human want, its recklessness of the fate of those who pine and suffer and die. But Christ opened the door of a new Paradise and let man see in. He gave to the human eye a totally different vision of the nature of Divine majesty. He showed that the majesty of God differed from the majesty of earthly kings not in having less, but in having more care. All earthly kinghood was defective by its inability to lift the whole burdens of a people; the government of the King of kings was supremely great because it could lift the burdens of all. That which distanced God from man was God's greater power of drawing near to the souls of men. Man held aloof from his brother man, and he had made his gods in his own image; Christ revealed a new image of God, a new thought of the Divine. Christ's majesty was the majesty of stooping; His cross was His crown. The sceptre which He wielded over humanity was the sceptre of love; because He was chief of all, He became the minister of all; because He was the ruler of all life, He gave His life a ransom for many.[2]

¶ Literally rendered, the verse reads, "He has you on His heart." He who fed the prophet by the brook, and kept the widow's cruse from wasting, and watched over the Israelites in the wilderness, and to whom even the sparrow's fall is not unnoticed—*He* has us, each one, on His almighty heart. Why, then, should we be so feverishly anxious, and worry ourselves out of all peace of mind. Why be so foolish as to carry that which the Infinite One will carry for us? Why decline the privilege of casting our care on Him who "has us on His heart"? Let us lighten our load by making God our burden-bearer. Let me from this day take my family cares, and my business cares, and roll them all over by faith and prayer on God, and have no care left except the care to please and honour my Lord. It will be well to get rid of my spiritual anxieties, too, in the same way. Let me lay the care of bringing me through on God. Let me tell God about everything, and burden Him with everything. "No more care," as the good

[1] D. Davies, *Talks with Men, Women and Children*, vi. 383.

[2] G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, 259.

Leighton says, "but only quiet diligence in thy duty, and dependence on Him for the carriage of thy matter."

O Lord, how happy should we be
If we could cast our care on Thee,
If we from self could rest;
And feel at heart that One above,
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,
Is working for the best.[1]

2. We need have no fear that the abandonment of our anxieties will leave us unprovided or undefended. Better provision will be made for us than we could possibly have contrived for ourselves. This is the wealth and the wonder of God's compassion. Faithful hearts are not only freed from the painful pack that galled them, but, as if their deliverance were not enough, and as if one blessing were only a groundwork for another, the oversight and the foresight they needed are thenceforth furnished for them; patient and willing shoulders receive the load we threw down; eyes of sharper vigilance than ours watch for us. Simply because we are willing to loosen our troubles and let them fly, we have not only peace but plenty. Divine energies that never weary, fidelity that never flags, wisdom that never errs, and affections that never droop or wander, uphold us.

If the father is providing for to-morrow's needs, why should his little boy leave his play, and lean pensively against the wall, wondering what had better be done? If the pilot has come on board, why should the captain also pace the deck with weary foot? If some wise, strong friend, thoroughly competent, has undertaken to adjust some difficult piece of perplexity for me, and if I have perfect confidence in him, and he assures me that he is well able to accomplish it, why should I fret longer? The thing is as good as done, since he has taken it in hand.

(1) *God's care is the care of a Father.*—The God whom we need to help our care is the Father whom Jesus discovered to men. He Himself grasped at multitudes, but He dealt with individuals, giving Himself to each as if there were no other in the world, and emboldening St. Thomas and all the host of his successors in the use of singular pronouns, "My Lord and my God," said St. Thomas;

[1] S. L. Wilson, *Helpful Words for Daily Life*, 19.

"He gave himself for me," said St. Paul. For there was nothing indiscriminate or impersonal in the ways of Jesus, and He taught men that each one of them counts as a separate person with God. If that is true it carries with it everything. The good news takes the sting out of all that men call evil fortune. If He spared not His Son, He will surely with Him give us all things freely. That is the God whom Jesus has brought to us, and in whom we may rest without dismay.

My child is lying on my knees,
The signs of Heaven she reads:
My face is all the Heaven she sees—
Is all the Heaven she needs.

And she is well, yea, bathed in bliss,
If Heaven is in my face—
Behind it all is tenderness,
And truthfulness and grace.

I mean her well so earnestly,
Unchanged in changing mood;
My life would go without a sigh
To bring her something good.

I also am a child, and I
Am ignorant and weak;
I gaze upon the starry sky,
And then I must not speak.

For all behind the starry sky,
Behind the world so broad,
Behind men's hearts and souls, doth lie
The Infinite of God.

If true to her, though dark with doubt
I cannot choose but be,
Thou, who dost see all round about,
Art surely true to me.

If I am low and sinful, bring
More love where need is rife;
Thou knowest what an awful thing
It is to be a Life.

Hast Thou not wisdom to enwrap
  My waywardness around,
And hold me quietly on the lap
  Of Love without a bound?

And so I sit in Thy wide space,
  My child upon my knee;
She looketh up into my face,
  And I look up to Thee.[1]

(2) *He is a God who considers the least as much as the greatest.*—There is a tendency in the human mind to treat God in a wrong way, as "such an one as ourselves." *We* are impressed by size, by immensity, by that which in some overwhelming manner touches the imagination. The lofty mountains, the far-expanding sea, the rolling thunders, the immensity of space, the stretching years of time—these touch us. We allow ourselves to suppose that God indeed in His greatness can be moved by a thought of innumerable material worlds, but scarcely by a human anxiety. We do dishonour to God. True greatness consists not only in command of vast views, but also in grasp of details. God's glorious work is as glorious in the colouring of the grass and the painting of the flowers as in the outline of the varied landscape. We are unjust to God, and we must feel that we are unjust if we allow ourselves to think at all. From our better self we read something of His character.

Will the father who is employed all day in dealing with some vast system of accounts, or some scheme for a nation's progress, be really less earnest about the sick child by whose bed he kneels when he is home again at night? Will the man who has to fulfil many functions all day long, meet the demands of business, bend his mind to give a dozen judgments, write letters arranging various matters of large interest, which involve many responsibilities—will he be really be less earnest about the joys and sorrows of the little girl who has her perplexities or troubles in the schoolroom, about the boy who is separated from him and at some humble work across rolling seas and distant continents?

¶ The whole current of modern thought runs against this faith. It insists on the insignificance of man. It emphasizes the

[1] George MacDonald.

question which Pascal shuddered at. What are we, shut in and lost amidst these frightful wastes of space, encompassed by flaming and unknown worlds? As Mark Rutherford has said, "Our temptation is to doubt whether it is of the smallest consequence whether we are or are not, and whether our being here is not an accident." The one answer is that for us Christ died. When we turn to the New Testament, we find the unseen ranks of good and evil contending for our souls, and every victory and every defeat an incident in the war of wars. The battle with flesh and blood, which often seems so sore, is hardly worth naming in presence of the graver struggle. Our fight is with principalities and powers, with the spiritual hosts of wickedness. Angels have charge concerning us. They whisper with saving voices when we are on the edge of peril. They bring back the words of Jesus in hours of despondency and gloom. They watch and rejoice over every movement of purity and tenderness. We belong, in a word, to God and Christ and the angels, and though here accounted nothing, it is otherwise in worlds where the measures are true.[1]

¶ My father's note on "The Children's Hospital" is: "A true story told me by Mary Gladstone. The doctors and hospital are unknown to me. The two children are the only characters, in this little dramatic poem, taken from life."

Miss Gladstone's letter ran thus:

There was a little girl in the hospital, and as the doctor and nurse passed by her bed they stopped, for her eyes were shut and they thought she was asleep. "We must try that operation to-morrow," he said, "but I am afraid she will not get through it." I forget what the child said, until Annie the girl in the next bed suddenly suggested, "I know what I should do, I should ask Jesus to help me." "Yes, I will, but oh! Annie, how will He know it's me, when there are such a lot of us in the ward?" "I'll tell you," said Annie, "put your arms outside the counterpane." The next morning the little girl's arms were outside the counterpane and her eyes were closed. She was dead.[2]

III.

The Remedy for Anxiety.

1. "Casting all your care upon him." St. Peter says that the condition of being able to cast our care upon God is that we should humble ourselves under His mighty hand. We cannot cast our

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll.

[2] *Tennyson*, ii. 253.

"anxiety" upon Him unless we submit ourselves to Him. One of the penalties of independence is that we cannot lean upon another. One of the advantages of all true sovereignty and government is that we can look for protection in the measure that we are the subjects of such rule. The independent man, to be consistent, ought to be satisfied with himself and his own resources, and never look to another for assistance or shelter. The moment he seeks aid or sympathy his independence is gone. The truth taught here, therefore, is a self-evident truth to every man who thinks for a moment—that if we would be relieved of some of our distracting cares, the only condition upon which God will relieve us of them is that we subject ourselves to Him.

My Father, it is good for me
To trust and not to trace;
And wait with deep humility
For Thy revealing grace.

Lord, when Thy way is in the sea,
And strange to mortal sense,
I love Thee in the mystery,
I trust Thy providence.

I cannot see the secret things
In this my dark abode;
I may not reach with earthly wings
The heights and depths of God.

So, faith and patience, wait awhile!—
Not doubting, not in fear;
For soon in heaven my Father's smile
Shall render all things clear.

Then Thou shalt end time's short eclipse,
Its dim, uncertain night;
Bring in the grand apocalypse,
Reveal the perfect Light.[1]

2. Having humbled ourselves let us next have faith in God. For beneath such humility there lies a still deeper feeling, the feeling of entire trust. The hand that was found mighty to bruise will be found now mightier to bless. When we not only cease to

[1] George Rawson.

resist it, but strive to be led by it, we learn to do without caring for ourselves; we can joyfully cast on Him the burden of anxiety which surely grows as life moves on, because we know that He cares for us and has both power and will to give us what we need. Without such confidence humility itself is not possible. Without humility, faith in the righteousness and loving-kindness of God becomes the presumption of those who suppose themselves to be His favourites. Thus all true humbling of ourselves before Him lifts us above the earth and makes us to sit with Christ in heavenly places.

¶ How to trust—that is the question. It is to be such a trust as a child has in its father. What are the characteristics of perfect trust? (1) First, it is a trust that *obeys*. There is no good in a trust that does not. You may put aside altogether the idea that you are trusting properly, if there is any known thing which your father wants you to do and you don't do it. After all, obedience is the test of trust. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Those who trust their father obey his lightest word; it is far more than any feeling. It is not a question of working ourselves up into feeling; it is the personal obedience of the child that is the real test. (2) Secondly, it is a trust that *works*. What more is there to be done here that you have not done? I do not know your lives. If I were speaking to you one by one, and we went into it, I have no doubt I might be able to suggest something which you might do for God that you are not doing. Is this trust we are speaking of simply a trust which issues in no action, which issues in no work for Him? That is not the right kind of trust. When the whole world is crying out for help, ours must be a trust that works. (3) Thirdly, it is a trust that *ventures*. I think myself that we do not make anything like enough ventures of faith. We are making a venture of faith in the diocese now—a venture of faith in building a theological college for London. At this particular time it is a great venture of faith. And yet I feel it is a venture of faith we are justified in making, in order to have a more efficient ministry in the Church of England. I hope that venture of faith will be recognized by God, and that He will supply us with the funds that we need. But you may have ventures of faith in your individual life. A girl may know she ought not to be in the place where she is, and yet it seems a great venture of faith to leave it. She must make a venture of faith if she trusts. She may not know where she is going. I have seen several off lately to Australia and Africa. It is a great venture of faith for them to

go. (4) Fourthly, it is a trust that *rejoices*, that has "joy in God, whatever happens." I am certain that the child of God who really believes in this superintending care ought to have more joy; I do not think anything ought to be able to drag us down if we believe it. This childlike trust ought to fill us every day with a real joy that the world can neither give nor take away. (5) Lastly, it must be a trust that *rests*. "When Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping." Surely, when you think of it, there is something very touching in the perfect trust of that servant of God: when the very next day he might have been led out to be executed, and probably would have been, he was simply sleeping like a child, secure in the personal presence of the Father.[1]

3. We must cast our care on God by the energy of prayer. Prayer is the practical expression of hope. While life is sunny and all things seem to be going smoothly, our prayers are apt to be wanting in reality. They are unreal by a failure in earnestness. If we really need and feel our need, then, and not till then, are we earnest in our prayers. Care at least does this for a sincere Christian—it presses upon him a sense of need. And when we need, and when we exert the virtue, the duty, of hope within us, then, not till then, are we in earnest in our prayers. And we fail also by want of simplicity and minuteness. We must learn to tell God all. There is no care, no anxiety, no worry, no distress, no perplexity, too small, if it is lying heavy on our hearts, to be laid on the heart of our Father. "Commit," says the Psalmist, "thy way unto the Lord." "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray," says St. James. How many a believer can testify that he went to the throne of grace heavy in spirit and came away light hearted; or, if not just that, if so to speak he did not leave his burden there, at least he brought away strength that made it comparatively light to bear. Prayer is the casting of our care on God in two ways: first, as it brings us into contact with Divine sympathy; secondly, as it takes hold of Divine strength.

With a true heart upheaving
My small load,
As Thou appointest, Lord, so let me bear
The duty-burden trusted to my care.

[1] Bishop A. F. W. Ingram, *Joy in God*, 146.

And though my face should all be wet
With toilsome sweat;
Show Thou the road—
Enough! no grieving!

But now, my heart, be careful
Lest thou care!
The Lord doth give me daily bread for nought,
And for the morrow doth Himself take thought.
Then let me serve Him, on my part,
With all my heart,
And wait my share
With spirit prayerful.

Ah, Lord! now add Thy blessing
To all I do!
And let Thy grace and help my word attend,
From the beginning even to the end.
Let each day's burden teach my eyes,
My heart, to rise—
Thy rest pursue—
Thy peace possessing!

4. "Casting *all* your care upon him." This little word "all" includes even the trivial and passing anxieties of each day. To suppose that some cares are too insignificant to take to God in prayer is not to honour Him, but unnecessarily to burden ourselves. It has been said that "white ants pick a carcase quicker and cleaner than a lion does," and so these little cares may even more effectually destroy our peace than a single great trouble, if, in our mistaken reverence for God's greatness, we refuse to cast them upon Him.

¶ One yelping dog may break our slumber on the stillest night. One grain of dust in the eye will render it incapable of enjoying the fairest prospect. One care may break our peace and hide the face of God, and bring a funeral pall over our souls. We must cast *all* our care on Him, if we would know the blessedness of unshadowed fellowship.[1]

¶ To trust God with all one is, or hopes for forever, this is True Faith. To trust God with Body, Soul, Spirit; with His Promises, with His Covenant of Grace, with His Christ, with anything whereby I might secure myself from being subject to

[1] F. B. Meyer, *Tried by Fire*, 198.

His pleasure; this is Faith in good earnest, this is Faith founded upon true knowledge: He knoweth God indeed, who dareth thus trust Him. Let others trust God *for Salvation*, but my spirit can never rest till it dares trust God *with Salvation*.[1]

5. And let us cast all our care upon Him, not gradually or half-heartedly but *once for all.* St. Peter uses a past tense for his verb and not a present, by which he suggests that this casting of our care upon God ought to be an act of the beginning. Just as there is no half-forgiveness on His side, so there should be no partial offering of trust on our side. An anxious heart is never a holy heart; and he who has not committed himself and his concerns to the grace and power of God, and done it once for all, has still to make the right start. At the outset, says St. Paul, I suffered loss of all things, and to-day, afresh, I count them but as rubbish that I may gain Christ. There is the irreversible act of the beginning, which is renewed with every day and each temptation. Having cast our care on Him, we cast it day by day afresh; and so the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps both heart and thought in Jesus Christ.

This does not deny what has been described in the life of a Christian as a "continual exchange of care for peace," but it does strongly suggest that the strengthening sense of God's interest in us may depend on our having reached a point when we, by an act of the faith and will co-operating, definitely take up our burden and throw it (so the original suggests) on Him and leave it there, and pass on, lightened and no longer bowed down under the weight of it. So much so may this be true that now, to turn to St. Paul's words, we add to our "prayer and supplication" thanksgiving, even before we see the fruit of our act, because we are as sure that He has taken from us as that we have cast on Him the burden of our care.

¶ A young lady had consecrated herself to the work of missions, and was about to go to India. Just at that point, an accident disabled her mother, and the journey had to be deferred. For three years she ministered at that bedside, until the mother died, leaving as her last request that she should go and visit her sick sister in the far West. She went, intending to sail for India immediately on her return; but she found the sister dying of

[1] Isaac Penington.

consumption, and without proper attendance: and once more she waited until the end came. Again her face was turned eastward, when the sister's husband died, and five little orphans had no soul on earth to care for them but herself. "No more projects for going to the heathen," she wrote. "This lonely household is my mission." Fifteen years she devoted to her young charge; and, in her forty-fifth year, God showed her why He had held her back from India, as she laid her hand in blessing on the heads of three of them ere they sailed as missionaries to the same land to which, twenty years before, she had proposed to go. Her broken plan had been replaced by a larger and a better one. One could not go, but three went in her stead: a good interest for twenty years.[1]

[1] M. R. Vincent, *God and Bread*, 160.

The Unfolding of Character.

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THE UNFOLDING OF CHARACTER.

Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge temperance; and in your temperance patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness love of the brethren; and in your love of the brethren love.—2 Pet. i. 5-7.

THE writer had set forth in the previous verses the great doctrine that God has given to us in Christ Jesus all things pertaining to life and godliness, and that the form in which this is given is that of exceeding great and precious promises, in order that by these we should be partakers of the Divine nature. After having set forth the things revealed in Christ, he considers how it is, in what particular condition of living it is, that we become partakers of these. The fulness that is in Christ is one thing; the actual enjoyment of that fulness by us personally is another. The 5th, 6th, and 7th verses contain an exhortation by complying with which we shall receive of that fulness.

1. "Giving all diligence." The first thing on which our attention is fixed is this, that the Christian life is an active life—one which contains in it a continual call for watchfulness and activity. It is not a condition of mere repose or of simple receiving; but there will be a continued activity connected with that receiving. A demand upon the whole man, upon the whole time of the whole man, is implied in the word "all"—"giving all diligence."

It is a demand for business vigilance in the realm of the Spirit. We are not to close our eyes and to allow our limbs to hang limp in the expectancy that the Lord will carry us like blind logs. He "made us of clay," but He "formed us men," and as men He purposes that we shall live and move and have our

being. And so He calls for "diligence." It is a word which elsewhere is translated haste, carefulness, business. It is very wonderful how frequently the New Testament takes its similes from the commercial world. "Trade ye herewith till I come." "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, buying up the opportunity." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman." In all these varied passages there is a common emphasis upon the necessity of businesslike qualities in our spiritual life. We are called upon to manifest the same earnestness, the same intensity, the same strenuousness in the realm of spiritual enterprise as we do in the search for daily bread.

¶ We must bring method into our religion. We must find out the best means of kindling the spirit of praise, and of engaging in quick and ceaseless communion with God, and then we must steadily adhere to these as a business man adheres to well-tested systems in commercial life. We must bring *alertness* into our religion; we must watch with all the keenness of an open-eyed speculator, and we must be intent upon "buying up every opportunity for the Lord." We must bring *promptness* into our religion. When some fervent impulse is glowing in our spirits we must not play with the treasured moment; we must strike while the iron is hot. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." We must bring *boldness* into our religion. Timid men make no fine ventures. In the realm of religion it is he who ventures most who acquires most. Our weakness lies in our timidity. Great worlds are waiting for us if only we had the courage to go in and possess them. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" And we must bring *persistence* into our religion. We must not sit down and wail some doleful complaint because the seed sown in the morning did not bring the harvest at night. We must not encourage a spirit of pessimism because our difficulties appear insuperable. We must go steadily on, and wear down every resistance in the grace-fed expectancy that we shall assuredly win if we faint not. Such are the characteristics of common diligence which we are to bring into co-operative fellowship with the forces of grace. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."[1]

2. "Add to your faith virtue" (A.V.). There are various kinds of addition in the world. You may fling a heap of stones

[1] J. H. Jowett, in *The Examiner*, Sept. 21, 1905.

together, without an aim and without a plan, and they fall into some sort of shape under the influence of the law of gravitation. The stones are simply flung together, and no thought is needed tc dispose of them; they fall into a certain shape, of necessity. But that is not the addition meant here. There is another kind of addition, when you lay stone to stone according to a plan, when you dress the stones and fit them together for your own purpose, and make for yourselves a home to dwell in, a place to work in, or a building in which you may worship God. That is nearer the meaning of the text, but there is something more than the mere fulfilment of a plan and purpose in the addition of the text. There is the addition which a tree makes to itself year by year, till it expands from the seed to the full majesty of perfect treehood. That addition is determined from within, not merely an addition from without and by an external agency. It is an unfolding from within, it is an addition by which the tree has mastered material once external to itself, transformed it, lifted it to a higher level and made it part of itself. That is nearer the meaning of our text. Yet one more attempt to find the full meaning of this addition. It is like that which boys and girls make to themselves from the day of their birth till they come to the fulness of the stature of perfect manhood and womanhood. They grow by striving, by winning the victory over external matter; they grow till they attain to fulness of bodily stature. But they grow also by feeling, wishing, desiring, by willing and acting, by foreseeing ends and taking means to realize them. They grow by feeling, thinking, willing. And to this kind of growth there is no limit.

(1) The older version has the preposition "to" throughout—"add to your faith virtue," and the rest; so that virtue, knowledge, and temperance were made to appear as separate, detached things, each of which could be tied or stuck on to the others. "*In* your faith supply virtue" means something different. It means that faith is the root from which virtue grows up. These graces, in short, are not ready-made articles, which we can appropriate and use mechanically, like the dressed and polished blocks of stone one sees in a builder's yard. Instead, they are as closely related as the members of a living body. They flourish together, and they

decay together, so near is the affinity and sympathy between them.

¶ Every added virtue strengthens and transfigures every other virtue. Every addition to character affects the colour of the entire character. Ruskin, in his great work, *Modern Painters*, devotes one chapter to what he calls "The Law of Help." And here is the paragraph in which he defines the law. "In true composition, everything not only helps everything else a *little*, but helps with its utmost power. Every atom is in full energy; and *all* that energy is kind. Not a line, nor spark of colour, but is doing its very best, and that best is aid." It is even so in the composition of character. Every addition I make to my character adds to the general enrichment. The principle has its reverse application. To withdraw a single grace is to impoverish every element in the religious life. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all."[1]

(2) "In your faith supply (or furnish) virtue." Now the Greek word translated "supply" is a very full and suggestive one. It is a word with a history. It takes us back to the days in old Athens when it was reckoned a high honour by a citizen to be asked to defray the expenses of a public ceremony. It means to *furnish the chorus* for the theatre; so that to the minds of many of those to whom the words were first addressed, the thought might have been suggested that these graces would come into the life *like a chorus*. They would come singing and dancing into it, filling it with joy and loveliest music. A saint of old thus carolled: "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." And here in the New Testament we have the Christian graces introduced as a chorus into life, which would be dull and flat and discordant without them.

¶ Have we not often wondered how endless the variety of music that can be won from the simple scale of seven with its octaves? As endless is the variety of soul-music that will flow from this simple scale of grace. And nothing but music will come from it. From a musical instrument quite correctly tuned, and on which the scale is faultless, the most discordant noises may be produced; but this cannot be in the spiritual sphere. Given the gamut of graces, all discord is banished from the life. Life will become one continual song, not always in the major mode, but

[1] J. H. Jowett, in *The Examiner*, Sept. 21, 1905.

perhaps most beautiful of all when it modulates into the minor in life's dark days; but a song it shall be from beginning to end, from the keynote and starting-point of Faith swelling onward and forward till it closes in the grand finale of the upper octave Love.[1]

¶ Architecture is said to be "frozen music." This is true of the commonest wayside wall. What is it that makes the sight of a well-built wall so pleasing to the eye? What is it that makes building a wall such an interesting employment that children take instinctively to it when they are in a suitable place, and have suitable materials at hand? Is it not the love of symmetry, the delight in shaping large and small, rough and smooth, pieces of stone, adapting them one to the other, and placing them in such a way that together they make a symmetrical structure? Every wall, be it rude as a moorland dyke, represents the love of order and the difficulties that have been overcome in making the stones of the wall to harmonize with one another. And if we see this curious harmony in the humblest rustic building, how grandly does it come out in the magnificent Gothic cathedral, where every part blends faultlessly with every other part, and carries out the design of the architect; and clustered pillar, and aerial arch, and groined roof soar up in matchless symmetry, and the soul is held spellbound by the poetry which speaks through the entire structure.[2]

I.

Faith.

The direction, "Add to your faith virtue," or as the Revised Version has it, "In your faith supply virtue," does not recognize faith as co-ordinate with these other virtues, but derives from faith the various excellences of character which are named. In naming each and all, it presupposes faith as the root from which all proceed. In this sense the Christian ideal of living begins with and presupposes a religion or a personal trust and love towards Christ as the object of love and confidence. It binds us to Him by an act of allegiance, in which are blended honour and gratitude, love and hope.

1. It must not be forgotten that this whole passage, with all the mighty possibilities which the sweep of its circle includes,

[1] J. M. Gibson, *The Glory of Life*, 65.
[2] H. Macmillan, *The Mystery of Grace*, 103.

proceeds on the assumption that certain great preliminary and vital transactions have taken place between the soul and God. Preparatory to this rich evolution there had to be an adequate involution. This is not merely assumed by the Apostle. It is stated. Look at verses 1, 2, and 3. "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that *have obtained* a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power *hath granted* unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue." Here, then, everything has been preceded by a process of moral adjustment, the harmonization of the individual will with the universal, and the insertion of a new life-principle which holds in its close-shut hand the promise and the potency of endless spiritual progression, of ever-growing similarity to God.

The writer, then, is not "preaching the Gospel"; he is not making known to the ignorant what they have not heard, or urging on the wicked and impenitent what they have neglected; he is not proclaiming pardon, mercy, reconciliation, and so on, to the miserable and the lost; he is contemplating persons of another sort, and doing a different kind of thing altogether. He assumes that the persons he addresses are believers—that they have faith, "like precious faith" with himself. They do not need, therefore, to have the Gospel "preached" to them, made known, pressed on their acceptance, or to be themselves "besought" and entreated "to be reconciled to God." They are past all that. They have heard the Gospel; have believed it; and are recognized as partakers of that faith in "the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," to which, in Scripture, the justification of the sinner is attached. Hence, you will observe, they are not exhorted to *have* faith,—or to "add" faith to anything. They have it; and, as having it, they are exhorted to "add" to it *all the other things*.

¶ If you want flowers, you must have roots, and the roots must be placed in a favourable soil. Any gardener will tell you that certain plants need a particular kind of mould if they are ever to be anything better than sickly-looking weeds; and people who neglect these precautions, or try to coerce nature into their

methods, have to pay for it next summer by having no flowers. Just so there is one soil, and only one, in which temperance and patience and godliness will take root and flourish, and that is a heart that has trusted Christ as Redeemer and bowed to Him as King and Lord.[1]

2. By faith, the writer means faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The trustful apprehension of God's unspeakable gift, of the mercy which rose over the world like a bright dawn when the Redeemer came—that is what he intends by the word. This is worth mentioning; for it is not uncommon to speak of faith abstractly, as no more than a hopeful, positive, serious way of regarding life. But when the New Testament writers say "faith" they mean, quite definitely, faith in contact with its proper object, Christ, and becoming through that contact a strong triumphant thing.

This faith is more than an intellectual assent to a speculative truth or an historical fact. It is more than credit to any fact, or assent to any truth. It is an act of loving devotion to a person in answer to His claims upon the heart, the response to His manifold love of grateful devotion, the reception of His offered pardon with renunciation of the forgiven sin, the consecration of the life to His cause, and a steadfast and open avowal of discipleship. Such a faith by no means excludes definite views of Christ's nature and work,—whence He came and whither He goes; what He must be as Divine or as human,—but it enters into the human soul and into human society as a living power, by its joyful and loving realization of Christ as the master of the heart who, though He was dead, yet lives, and, behold! is alive for evermore; but who is yet as near and as sympathizing to every disciple as when He spoke words of personal tenderness to the weakest and the most disconsolate, or wept tears of sympathy at Lazarus' grave.

¶ On January 16, 1894, Dr. Temple (then Bishop of London) gave a striking lecture to the clergy of the diocese at Sion College on "Faith." He began by referring at some length to a conversation upon Justification by Faith which he, when a young scholar at Balliol, once had with "Ideal" Ward, then a Fellow of the College and considerably his senior. Ward quoted the definition of faith given by Coleridge in the beginning of his *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*: "Faith subsists in the synthesis of the reason

[1] H. R. Mackintosh, *Life on God's Plan*, 231.

and the individual will," a definition which the Bishop took as the text of his lecture.

It was not (he owned) a definition that would have been accepted in the last century, nor one which was generally to be found in the writers of Christian evidences; but, while it had been assumed that faith was the act of the intellect only, he contended that to make it merely an intellectual act would be to lower the nature of faith itself. Such a theory was, he said, inconsistent with the nature of man, between whose various faculties and powers a sharp distinction could not really be drawn. The tendency to separate the intellectual and the will forces was, he felt sure, a mistaken one. The intellect could not act in its fulness without the will, nor could the will act in its fulness without the intellect, nor indeed could either act without the affections. But, still further, the tendency of this attempted separation of the intellect from the will, and the assigning of faith to the intellect entirely, was always towards laying the whole stress of faith upon external evidence. The intellect taken by itself dealt with external evidence more easily than any other, and consequently, wherever that notion of faith had either consciously or unconsciously prevailed, there had been always a tendency to base faith entirely upon miracles, and to make them the one conclusive proof of the truth of God's revelation, or especially of that part of His revelation from which we derived our Christian knowledge. That, however, was no sure foundation; for it was a resting, not upon miracles as the real basis, but upon the historical evidence of those miracles; and there, of course, there necessarily came in the fact that the judgment upon miracles belonged entirely to the ordinary intellect. The man who was the best judge of such evidence was not necessarily a good man or a spiritual man; he was simply an intellectual man who could balance one kind of testimony against another.

The Bishop then said that faith might begin in various ways. It might begin within or without; but if it was to be a permanent thing, if it was to be supreme over life, then it must find its root at last within the soul. Faith must be a total, not a partial—a continuous, not a desultory—energy. Faith must be light, a form of knowing, a beholding of truth. The anchor of faith was a true belief in the moral law, and the moral law must necessarily have a supreme personality. It was the voice which governed the man from within, and at the same time asserted its supremacy over everything else.

This analysis of faith was then applied by the Bishop to the Christian Faith.

"The acceptance of God, the acceptance of Christ, the acceptance of the Bible, the acceptance of the doctrines taught in the Bible, and the acceptance of those facts which were bound up with those doctrines—that was the faith alike of the great divine and the uneducated peasant. The one might be able to see the reasons of his faith, and the other might not; but both alike had real evidence upon which their faith rested, in that absolute firm foundation which God had given to every man in his own soul."[1]

3. But, always remembering that faith is faith in Christ, let us take "faith" in all the breadth and depth of its Scripture meaning. We are so apt to make narrow what the Scriptures have not made narrow, and to make wide what the Scriptures have not made wide. When faith unfolds itself, it is not a process similar to that by which a house is built. It is not as if we were adding something to something in an external manner. No doubt there is some truth in that thought, for "ye are God's building." But "ye are also God's husbandry." We are so ready to make faith mean only the faith that justifies, to limit it to one function, and to fail to recognize its universal character and its great function. It is true that the receiving and resting on Jesus Christ for salvation is one of the great characteristics of faith, but the meaning of faith is wider than that. It is that which makes us at home in God's eternal world; it is that which enables us to endure as seeing Him who is invisible; it is that which enables us to grasp with firm, unwavering hand the realities of God's eternal world, and to feel at home in His unseen presence. It gives us power to grasp the eternal principles of the righteousness, truth, and love of God.

¶ Faith to Dr. John Watson was that knowledge of God and that discipline of the soul, together with that service of man which from the beginning have affected the more spiritual minds of the race and created saints, whose literature is contained in the writings of prophets, apostles, theologians, mystics, whose children have been the missionary, the martyr, the evangelist, the philanthropist, whose renaissance has been those revivals of religion which have renewed the face of society.[2]

4. Observe now the connexion that exists between faith and the virtues. "Add to your faith." This is the root, the living

[1] *Frederick Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ii. 70.

[2] W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ian Maclaren*, 276.

principle. All true morality is born of spirituality, and all complete morality is born of the spirituality created and maintained by Christian faith.

(1) Faith means *vision*, and the faith of Christ means the vision of the perfect One. In Christ was the blending of all excellences. As a modern writer says: "No one can tell what was Christ's predominant virtue." As we live a life of faith in the Son of God we live in the presence of absolute beauty and perfection.

(2) Faith means *aspiration*, and the faith of Christ means not only the sight of perfection, but also a passion for it. As the worldly man covets property, and restlessly adds field to field and house to house; as the intellectual man thirsts for knowledge, and is ever stretching out to new horizons and cataloguing new stars, —so the spiritual man rejoices in the goodness that restlessly longs to complete itself. Nothing short of the beauty of the Lord satisfies a true believer.

(3) Faith means *transformation*—we are changed into the likeness of that on which we passionately gaze; and faith in Christ means that we are changed from glory into glory until we are complete, lacking nothing. Faith in God, in the higher universe, in the glorious future; faith in Christ as our Redeemer, in the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the crown that fadeth not away—this is the faith by which the just live and fulfil the whole law. Faith is the root whence spring all the fruits of righteousness, the stem whence radiate the seven branches of the golden candlestick. All colours are in the light of the sun, and all moral beauty is in Christian faith, revealing evermore its changing hues according to time, place, and circumstance.[1]

II.

Virtue.

1. The word "virtue" cannot be taken here in the sense which it bears in ordinary use. As a general term it is employed to designate *all* excellence;—here, it is only *one* excellence out of many. It must stand, therefore, for something distinct and specific. It does so. It stands, according to the exact import of

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *Studies in Christian Character*, ii. 77.

the original term, for "force," "energy," "manly strength." It describes a readiness for action and effort, the disposition and the power of strenuous achievement.

The Latin word *vir* meant a man, or a hero; and the Latin word *virtus* meant the special quality of the man or the hero. Virtue, to the Latins, meant, thus, the quality of manhood, or heroism. It was the special quality of life, without which a man was merely a creature, an animal. It gave tone, and dignity, and force to men. Virtue and manliness were almost synonymous words. To be manly was to be virtuous; to be virtuous was to be manly. And it is in this sense that the word is used in our text. For the Greek word conveys just this conception of manly virtue. We associate with it the idea of courage, robustness, manhood.

In some ways "virtue" is the proper translation of the Greek word, but the Christian should remember that the meaning of human nature has been deepened and widened beyond reckoning since the Word became flesh and dwelt among men. Christ Jesus is a revelation of the possibility of human nature, and it has become a new thing since He took our nature on Himself. So when we speak of manliness in the Christian sense we mean manliness after the type introduced into life by Jesus Christ. It is not the Greek or Roman type of character that is here meant, not the life of self-assertion, of mere courage, or of that tendency which says the race is to the swift, and the battle to the strong; but the kind of life which realizes itself in service, which spends itself in saving others, which has as its ideal the life of Him who when He was reviled, reviled not again, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

2. We may take "virtue" in various senses, not excluding one another, but each contributing something to the whole meaning.

(1) First of all it is efficacy. It is faith in energetic action. We often employ the word in this sense. We speak of there being virtue in a medicine to cure a particular disease. We also talk of one thing happening "in virtue of" another, *i.e.* the one is the cause of the other, the power which produces the other. And the term is often used with this meaning in Scripture. Thus, in

the case of the woman who came secretly among the crowd and touched the hem of Jesus' garment, it is said Jesus knew that virtue had gone out of Him. That is to say, Jesus was conscious of having put forth an efficacious power to heal the woman. And on another occasion, when Jesus came down from the mount, where He had all night been engaged in prayer, we are told, "the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all."

Elsewhere this same writer has the word twice, but then he must be using it in quite a special and not the ordinary sense, for it is to God that he applies it. He speaks of "shewing forth the virtues of God"; and again, just before the text, he speaks, if we take the true reading, of God calling us "by his own glory and virtue." Well, this last passage will give us a clue to what St. Peter means in the text. For when he speaks of God's virtue, he means, we are clear, the energy and power which God exercises on those whom He calls; the strong, constraining force with which His arm draws us nearer to Himself. There you have it—the energy, the power, the effectiveness of God, or, if the case be so, of man; that is what St. Peter means by "virtue." This is what we have to equip our faith with—energy, power, earnestness, effectiveness.

¶ Just as the optic nerve feeds the brain with images of the physical order, so the faith-nerve feeds the soul with visions of the spiritual order. The amount of will-power poured into our faith will determine the measure of its efficiency and the richness of its result. It is the same in every other department of life. Concentration, the power to focus the scattered forces of the mind on one point of observation, and the faculty of cutting out all disturbing and distracting factors, will ever be the measure of man's success. Deficient will-power is an all-sufficient explanation of failure, whether in law, medicine, literature, commerce, or trade. If you saw a young fellow of splendid ability failing on this account, you would say, "In your faculty supply will." Just as you have seen business men fall out of the running through lack of this element, so St. Peter had seen Christian men falling out of the Christian race. From this failure he is anxious to save them. Hence his rallying word at the close of this passage, "If ye do these things ye shall never stumble." We live by correspondence with our surroundings. Indeed, life has been defined by Herbert Spencer as "correspondence with environment." Now, the method

of correspondence between the soul and the environing God is prayer; but prayer requires a conductor, and that conductor or line of communication is faith. That is why we read, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But the faith-line must not be a dead wire. It must quiver with the current of living will. Only thus can it become the conveying medium of our communication, and give carrying power to our prayers.[1]

(2) The term is often fairly enough translated "courage." But the word "courage," again, is rather narrow. It is only at times that courage is called into request, whereas the virtue the Apostle has in view is always in request. It is that practical energy which resides in the will, and which is necessary to carry faith into action. We may, for convenience, call it *the grace of doing*. "Faith cometh by hearing"; but there are many who hear and fail to do, for want of this practical energy, this determination which leads on to action It is the practical, as distinguished from the speculative or the sentimental spirit.

¶ There was a moment in the French Revolution when the Republic was ringed round with enemies. The Prussians were on the Rhine, the Piedmontese in the Alps, the English in the Netherlands—La Vendée had rebelled in the west, and Lyons in the east. But Danton cried, "We need audacity, and again audacity, and always audacity." It is what I must have in the Holy War—a sanctified audacity that will dare anything and everything on Christ's behalf.[2]

¶ Once in Northern India a detachment of soldiers were led against a band of robbers who had entrenched themselves in a strong position at the head of a narrow gorge. The troops were marching along the valley between the steep sides, when a sergeant and eleven men separated from the rest by taking the wrong side of the ravine. The officer in command signalled them to return. They, however, mistook the signal for a command to charge. For a moment they looked up the rocky heights, and saw their enemies above the ramparts. Then with a ringing cheer they clambered up the steep side. At the top were seventy robbers sheltered behind a breastwork. It was a desperate encounter, but against such odds it could not last long. Six fell on the spot—the rest were hurled backward into the depths below. Now it was a custom in that nation when any of their bravest

[1] H. Howard, *The Summits of the Soul*, 11.
[2] A. Smellie, *In the Hour of Silence*, 312.

fell in battle to distinguish the most valiant by a thread tied round the wrist—a thread of red or green silk, red denoting the greatest courage. Some little time afterwards the English troops found the twelve bodies stark and gashed, but round the wrist of each was tied the scarlet thread—the distinction of the hero. So, even amongst a wild and savage robber horde, bravery, the bravery of an enemy, is a thing to be reverenced and honoured. I ask you to-day to come and pledge yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, *because it does need courage.*[1]

(3) Among the Romans "virtue" meant especially a manly courage in the field. How they hated cunning and artifice and guile! It was part of the true combatant that he would never take unfair advantage of his adversary. He would beat him in fair contest, or not at all. There was a true chivalry about these old-world heroes. They would not stoop to trickery and deceit and evasion. They relied on strength and skill and endurance; on force of hand and head and heart. They knew how to take punishment like men, and to use victory with magnanimity. And their whole idea of this true bearing, this brave and open spirit entered into the word "virtue."

¶ It takes more of real manhood to confess oneself in the wrong than to forgive and forget an offence. It is easier to be generous than to be just. He was not losing his manliness, but just gaining it again, who said "Father, I have sinned." And neither the individual nor the Church is losing manliness, but gaining it, that can be great enough to say "I am wrong." J. H. Green says that few scenes in English history are more touching than the one which closed the long struggle between Edward I. and the barons over the Charter, "when Edward stood face to face with his people in Westminster Hall, and, with a sudden burst of tears, owned himself frankly in the wrong." Aye, they were kingly tears! and it was the confession of a king![2]

3. We need this "virtue" in our faith. That is to say, we want to believe in an honest, robust, straightforward, manly way. Our convictions are to be held in a way becoming a man—frankly and manfully confessed, and based on a thoughtful and candid consideration of the various problems that we have to face. In

[1] M. G. Pearse, *Short Talks for the Times*, 98

[2] C. Silvester Horne, *Sermons and Addresses*, 146.

other words, behind our beliefs, penetrating and informing them, is to be our own true and manly spirit. We may believe what is wrong—for as long as man lives it will be human to err—but, at least, we must be true. The real truth and sincerity of our mind and heart must never be in doubt. God has nowhere promised that He will keep our minds from error. To exercise the mind in discrimination, in discovery, in analysis and synthesis, this is *our* business—the task committed to us by the Infinite God. But God has promised to keep our hearts true.

¶ Every one remembers the well-worn tale of the pious lady of Vermont in the United States, the view from whose window was blocked by a rocky hill, and who determined to test the promise to faith that it should be removed and cast into the sea. And, according to her lights, she prayed and prayed the night through, till the dawn peeped in at the window, and there was the hill unmoved. "Ah!" she said, "just as I expected!" But there came along that way a prospecting engineer, with his instruments and chain measures and dumpy leveller, and examined that hill and accurately measured it. It was in the way of a new railroad, and he expressed his firm faith that it could be removed. The Company at his back adopted his faith, and he added to his faith virtue in the shape of two thousand navvies, and in a few months that hill was removed. If he had had no faith, he would not have put on the navvies; and if he had not put on the navvies his faith would have been uninfluential and inactive. He added to his faith virtue; he added to his orthodoxy activity; he added to his creed conduct; he added to his conviction action. His faith was as the grain of mustard seed, which, when the life or substance is awakened within, moves what, in comparison with its size, are literally mountains. And so the engineer removed the mountain that resisted the prayer, unmixed with action, of the Christian lady of Vermont.[1]

III.

Knowledge.

There is always danger lest zeal should be misdirected; lest it should be employed in the accomplishment of a wrong object or lest it should adopt wrong means to attain even a good object. There is danger too of zeal becoming a wild fanaticism. Hence,

[1] B. Wilberforce, *Sanctification by the Truth*, 134.

virtue must have in it a supply of knowledge. The Christian possessing zeal, but without knowledge to guide it, is like a ship without a pilot, in danger of splitting on the rocks. St. Paul was constitutionally an earnest and whole-hearted man, in whatever cause he undertook. The zeal which led Saul of Tarsus to persecute from city to city those who called on the name of the Lord Jesus was just as intense as that which led him afterwards, when he had become the great Apostle of the Gentiles, to exclaim, "I am ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." In the former case, however, his zeal was without knowledge. He did it, as he himself said, "in ignorauce."

Faith without knowledge is a wilful and unmeaning thing, which can never guide men into light and truth. It will pervert their notions of God; it will transfer them from one religion to another; it may undermine and often has undermined their sense of right and wrong. It has no experience of life or of history, no power of understanding or foreseeing the nature of the struggle which is going on in the human heart or the movements which affect Churches, and which, as ecclesiastical history shows, always have been, and will be again. It is apt to rest on some misapplied quotation from Scripture, and to claim for its own creed, theories, and fancies, the authority of inspiration. It is ready to assent to anything, or at least to anything that is in accordance with its own religious feeling, and it has no sense of falsehood or truth. It is fatal to the bringing up of children, because it never takes the right means to its ends, and has never learned to discern differences of character. It never perceives where it is in this world. It is narrowed to its own faith and the articles of its creed, and has no power of embracing all men in the arms of love, or in the purposes of God. It is an element of division among mankind, and not of union. It might be compared to a fire, which gives warmth but not life or growth—which, instead of training or cherishing the tender plants, dries them up, and takes away their spring of youth.

¶ Manliness, that which colloquially we call pluck, without knowledge is practically useless, except perhaps to a bulldog. The man who knows is always head and shoulders above the man who does not know, though the latter may be the superior of the former in vigour and endurance. What is the justification for the

millions we spend annually in secular education? It is that ignorance is the mother of degradation; knowledge is the road to moral and social improvement. Plato says: "Better be unborn than untaught, for ignorance is the root of misfortune." [1]

1. This knowledge covers the three great relations of life—God, self, and fellow-man. As surely as faith is translated into character will character result in richer and fuller accessions to our knowledge of God. Over against our spiritual faculties, and answering to them, is a world of spiritual being—a world with sights more beautiful, harmonies more sweet, relationships more enduring, and joys more deep and full than those of earth and time. With the growth and development of the spiritual life there will come a fuller and more accurate knowledge, not only of the spiritual world without, but also of that within. A deeper knowledge of God will result in a fuller knowledge of self, and a clearer perception of duty; for all duty springs necessarily out of the relations subsisting between the human and the Divine. And this knowledge of God and duty is not merely an intellectual acquisition to be enjoyed, but a moral dynamic to be expressed in life and turned to practical ends. If we are taken up into this Mount of Transfiguration, it is not that we may abide there in rapt contemplation, but that we may descend with increased power to dispossess the demons of the plain.

¶ Two ordination candidates, on one occasion at the Fulham dinner-table, were evidently anxious to impress him with the fact that they were total abstainers, and took occasion to boast of their profound ignorance of wines and spirituous liquors of every kind; whereupon, to their astonishment, the Bishop entered upon an exhaustive disquisition on *Vintages of Port*, mentioning the various years in which the grape harvest had failed or succeeded and other factors that determined the quality and quantity of the yield of wine. The youths were overheard exclaiming to each other in pious horror, as they left the hall, "Who'd have thought it *from him*! He talked like a wine merchant." [2]

But it was his knowledge that gave Dr. Temple's enthusiasm in the cause of temperance its power.

2. Again, knowledge here does not so much mean enlarged apprehensions of spiritual truth; the reason—exalted and purified by

[1] B. Wilberforce, *Sanctification by the Truth*, 138.
[2] *Frederick Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ii. 36.

the light flowing and falling upon it from revealed objective realities —"comprehending" more and more the meaning of the "mystery" "in which are hid," or deposited, "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." It does not mean this, but rather the instruction and culture of the understanding, which has to do with terrene and tangible matters; the proper apprehension of the possible and the right; and the wise adaptation of means to ends. Strength and force, resolute purpose and daring energy, are to be presided over and directed by large knowledge. Without this, with the best intentions a man may blunder in all he does; may waste his powers in attempting the impossible, and be distinguished for nothing but for indiscreet and undiscriminating zeal. Ignorance is neither the mother of devotion, nor a skilful and effective doer of work. As contemplation and action must go together, so also must action and intelligence. "With all thy getting, therefore, get understanding."

¶ Any zeal is proper for religion, but the zeal of the sword and the zeal of anger; this is *the bitterness of zeal*, and it is a certain temptation to every man against his duty; for if the sword turns preacher, and dictates propositions by empire instead of arguments, and engraves them in men's hearts with a poignard, that it shall be death to believe what I innocently and ignorantly am persuaded of, it must needs be unsafe to *try the spirits, to try all things*, to make inquiry; and yet, without this liberty, no man can justify himself before God or man, nor confidently say that his religion is best. This is *inordination of zeal*; for Christ, by reproving St. Peter drawing his sword even in the cause of Christ, for His sacred and yet injured person, teaches us not to use the sword, though in the cause of God or for God Himself.

When Abraham sat at his tent door, according to his custom, waiting to entertain strangers, he espied an old man, stooping and leaning on his staff, weary with age and travail, coming towards him, who was a hundred years of age. He received him kindly, washed his feet, provided supper, caused him to sit down; but observing that the old man prayed not nor begged a blessing on his meat, he asked him why he did not worship the God of heaven. The old man told him that he worshipped the fire only, and acknowledged no other God. At which answer Abraham grew so zealously angry that he thrust the old man out of his tent, and exposed him to all the evils of the night and an unguarded condition. When the old man was gone, God called to Abraham and asked him where the stranger was? He replied, I thrust him

away because he did not worship Thee. God answered him, "I have suffered him these hundred years, although he dishonoured me: and couldst not thou endure him one night?"[1]

3. It is a knowledge that grows out of life. It reflects and tries to understand something of its way of living, its way of acting, and strives to think out the principles of its life and action. The rugged maxims hewn out of life, and polished to roundness and smoothness by frequent action, grow into fixed and definite knowledge. It is the usual and fruitful way of human knowledge in general. It begins at the right end. It is simply thinking out into clearness the principles on which human life is based, and stating them clearly and making them the basis of further action. We are coming to understand something of this principle, and we are beginning to teach our children knowledge, and to make them see how knowledge grows out of action. Not abstract principles first, but concrete practice, and then the principles that grow out of practice. Such knowledge as the blacksmith has of iron, as the joiner has of wood, as any man has of the material of his work —such is the knowledge commended here. Faith is the proof that a man is living; faith has its results in the new character, in the new humanity, and knowledge reflecting on life and on the new character comes to know itself and its principles of action, and so leads on to more assured action. There is no limit to thinking and to the progress which comes from thinking, only thinking must always keep hold of life, must never forget that after all thinking is only a form of living. Out of manliness knowledge.

> And what we know not now, we then shall know,
> When from the heights of the eternal hills
> We shall look back on time, interpreting
> Old dreams, unravelling the tangled coil
> Of life, and knowing even as we are known.
> All after-thoughts belong to man, with all
> The doubts that hang around us here; to God
> Pertains the eternal forethought, and pure light
> That knows no shadow or a shade: to Him
> All space, all time, are ever, ever clear;
> Himself the present, and Himself the future,
> Himself the First and Last, the All in All.[2]

[1] Jeremy Taylor. [2] Horatius Bonar.

IV.

Temperance.

The word "temperance" has in modern times become narrowed, just as the word "virtue" has become extended in meaning. Most people understand it now in relation to one sin, which is called "the sin of intemperance," viz. drunkenness; but it need scarcely be said that while of course it applies to that sin, it does not apply to it alone; it is temperance in all things. The best word perhaps is *self-control*. It is the grace of abstaining from all kinds of evil to which we are tempted; of holding back when lust urges us to go forward. And certainly we all find it hard enough in some direction or other. It may be very easy for us to "hold back" from the use of intoxicating drinks if we have no temptation in that direction. It does not follow that it is easy to abstain from hasty words or from angry feelings. But to give way to the latter would be just as much a breach of self-control as to yield to the former.

1. Temperance, then, is self-control. It implies that the man truly temperate has the faculties of his mind, as well as his constitutional propensities, under the completest command. Like the managed steed in the hand of the rider, like the helm in the hand of a steersman strong and steady, his tongue, his temper, his very thoughts, are under authority, and instead of being run away with and rendered ridiculous by his own wayward passions, his strong will—strong in Another's strength—is ever able to subdue the whole body. Temperate in all things, he is able to look without envy on the pleasures of sin, and in his farewell to Egypt he feels no pang for the flesh-pots. Amidst provocation still calm, and never frustrating by intemperate language well-intended reproof or remonstrance, he gains in momentum the force which others waste in fluster and fury; and crowns the whole by the elastic promptitude with which he is able to transfer from one theme to another all the powers of his mind, or make the instant transition from needful repose or congenial pursuits to duties stern and imperious.

¶ "Knowledge puffeth up." It has a tendency to foster a

spirit of self-sufficiency, and to lead us to become proud, boastful, self-confident. We begin to think our wisdom will preserve us from all danger and enable us to overcome all temptation. We forget that the flesh is strong, that the world is alluring, and that the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. We forget that the Christian life is a struggle, and that it is no easy matter to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. And so the Apostle says, "In your knowledge let there be a supply of temperance," *i.e.* of self-control. Let there be a crucifixion of the flesh; a keeping of the body under; a control of all evil passions, whether of the temper, of the appetite, or of the tongue. You must not only know what to do, but also have firmness and determination to do it. Solomon had wisdom, but he lacked temperance. He who would gain the mastery must be temperate in all things. He must endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Difficulties will stand in the Christian's way, and no matter how great his knowledge may be, the Hill Difficulty must be climbed on his knees. He may often have to prostrate himself before the throne of the heavenly grace, crying for help. There may even have to be "strong crying and tears."[1]

¶ There are times when we have by effort to control ourselves; "Watch and pray," says Christ, "that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." It is dangerous for even the saintliest man to relax his guard over himself; as the example of David warns us. There is sometimes a rapid and terrible reaction from spiritual excitement to sensual excess. Hours of temptation await the hero; in weariness and unguardedness the princely Elijah was fretful and ungenerous. There is another temptation, too, of which St. Paul tells us something; the temptation to abandon the toilsome endeavour of the Christian calling, allured to voluptuous ease. Only the habit of plying himself with lofty motive secured even St. Paul against this danger. "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die."[2]

2. It must be said that nothing could have been further from St. Peter's mind than the idea of self-control in a merely bodily sense. To give it this interpretation would be to give too narrow and impoverished a range to the Apostle's thoughts. He has long ago in his thinking left this stage behind. We must look for a

[1] J. McIlveen, *Christ and the Christian Life*, 93.
[2] A. Mackennal, *The Life of Christian Consecration*, 58.

larger and deeper meaning in his words. Otherwise we must believe the train of his reasoning to have suddenly reversed its gear and run back to its starting-point, an assumption which is hardly to be entertained. If we look back for a moment at the sweep of his thought, we shall see that those to whom he wrote this Epistle had evolved past the stage of ordinary self-control. The fact is, that the whole passage is related to service, and keyed to the note of diligence. It is not a question of controlling the forces of the old life, but those of a new.

¶ When Franklin discovered electricity, he introduced a new force into human history. But this new force, with all its tremendous possibilities, required to be understood before it could be safely handled. The laws of its conduction, induction, and insulation had to be ascertained, if it were to be successfully yoked to the service of man, and applied to the work of the world. So with spiritual power. Faith becomes the conductor, through which a new force passes into our lives. We have to study its laws and the conditions of its working, because we are responsible for its legitimate use. It becomes a stewardship for which we are made personally accountable. St. Peter saw the temptations to which its trustees would be exposed when faced by the awful problems of evil, and the wrongs that oppress mankind. The temptation is often strong to the social reformer to let himself go, to fling himself against the moral abuses of his time, and by unwise word and deed retard instead of hastening the Kingdom of God. Instances of misdirected zeal on the part of those whose purity of intention cannot be questioned might unfortunately be multiplied from the annals of the Christian Church. Numerous examples could be quoted to prove that even moral power, unless controlled, may work immoral ends. Elijah, John the Baptist, the Apostles James and John, and even Christ Himself, had to face this peril. The first-named had let himself go at Carmel in the slaughter of the priests of Baal; and the lesson of Horeb was intended to show, that not by the forces of wind and earthquake and fire, but by the still small voice of love, were men to be won back to loyalty. The human heart is to be subdued into allegiance, not by storm of passion and invective, but by a tenderness that never grows peevish, by a self-governing devotion that will suffer and even die that it may save.[1]

¶ When some one speaks a hard word to you, or writes some abominable thing about you in a newspaper, what do you do?

[1] H. Howard, *The Summits of the Soul*, 27.

Let me tell you one thing. When I was a young man at the University I learned boxing from a very skilled prize-fighter. Of course, at first he could do what he liked with me with his fists, and I remember when I got a very hard blow just in the middle of my face I hit out savagely. He put down his hands, took me aside, and taught me what I have never forgotten. He said, "Mr. Wilberforce, whenever you get a blow, don't hit out wildly, but take a step back, and just keep your hands up, and ask yourself 'What was I doing wrong, and why did I get that blow?'" Will you apply that lesson to life? I have taught it over and over again to young men, and more than one has learned to thank me for it.[1]

If Christ came questioning the soul of me,
(If Christ came questioning,)
I could but answer, "Lord, my little part
Has been to beat the metal of my heart,
Into the shape I thought most fit for Thee;
And at Thy feet, to cast the offering;
Shouldst Thou come questioning.

"From out the earth-fed furnace of desire,
(Ere Thou cam'st questioning,)
This formless and unfinished gift I brought,
And on life's anvil flung it down, while hot:
A glowing thing, of selfishness and fire,
With blow on blow, I made the anvil ring;
(Ere Thou cam'st questioning).

"The hammer, Self-Control, beat hard on it;
(Ere Thou cam'st questioning,)
And with each blow, rose fiery sparks of pain;
I bear their scars, on body, soul, and brain.
Long, long I toiled; and yet, dear Lord, unfit,
And all unworthy, is the heart I bring,
To meet Thy questioning."[2]

V.

Patience.

1. The fact that this word occurs so late in the list of the steps of ethical attainment according to St. Peter, after faith and

[1] *Bishop Ernest Wilberforce*, 12.
[2] E. W. Wilcox, *Poems of Experience*, 37.

virtue and knowledge and self-control, suggests that in its deepest signification it is a quality appertaining only to an advanced stage of spiritual acquirement.

¶ I do not know what you think about patience, but to me it is the rarest thing under the sun. I have never met a patient man. I have never met one whose patience did not break down somewhere. I have never read of a patient man. Moses was called the meekest of men, and no doubt he did bear up wonderfully under his many provocations; but his patience gave way more than once, for he broke the tables in his haste, and in his haste he smote the rock, when he ought simply to have spoken to it. Job has been called the most patient of men, but even Job, under the torment of his painful disease, under the wrong-headed argumentation of his friends, and under the nagging of his wife, lost self-control and cursed his day. There has never been a patient man on earth, save the Man who did all things well.[1]

¶ Most of us are terribly impatient with children, and yet that is worst of all impatience. Dean Stanley, in his Life of Arnold, relates how Dr. Arnold told him that in his early days as a schoolmaster he lost patience with a dull boy. The lad looked up in his face, and said: "Why do you speak angrily, sir; indeed, I am doing the best I can." Dr. Arnold said: "I never was so ashamed in my life; that look and that speech cured me, and I don't think I was ever impatient with a dull boy again.[2]

2. There are three stages in the exercise of patience. First, it is simply submission to the will of God under disappointment or suffering. Next, it expresses itself in persistent endurance, being almost equivalent to perseverance, and then its active quality is shown in faith in God and the forward view.

(1) *Submission.*—What a field for patience, understood as submission to the will of God, or Christian resignation, there is in the trials of life! The Stoic is not patient, for he is past feeling; and where the pain is not perceived there is no need for patience. But the Christian is a man of feeling, and he usually feels more acutely than other people; and it is often with the tear of desolation in his eye, or the sweat of anguish on his brow, that he clasps his hands, and cries, Father, Thy will be done!

[1] J. Iverach, *The Other Side of Greatness*, 111.
[2] B. Wilberforce, *Sanctification by the Truth*, 164.

¶ The Greek word here translated patience, means, etymologically, rather the school in which patience is learnt than actual patience. The word classically means remaining behind, either taking or being forced to take the hindermost place, being compelled to stand still when you desire to go forward; and no discipline can be imagined more severe for the average restless human character. Experience, however, is constantly proving that this "patience" is a condition, an ingredient, of real progress. For example, during that black week when we were all horror-stricken at our early reverses in South Africa, an experienced soldier assured me that these reverses would prove to be the salvation of the situation. If, he said, a few flashy successes had attended our arms at the first, we should have failed to recognize the seriousness of the undertaking. No reinforcements would have been prepared, transports and remounts would not have been forthcoming, and when our forces had penetrated into the country far from their base, our well-armed, mobile, and perfectly prepared enemy would have surrounded us, and great disaster would have followed. I think he was right.[1]

(2) *Perseverance.* — The relation between temperance and patience is evident here. Temperance is the grace of *holding back*, patience is the grace of *holding on*. The one holds back when lust urges on, the other holds on when vexations and annoyances threaten to move us from our equanimity or steadfastness.

¶ Lord Kitchener's railway to Khartoum is a conspicuous example of the result of this attitude of mind. Discouraged by every engineer he consulted, baffled by floods and sandstorms, opposed at every step by hostile bands of Dervishes, he persevered. The strength and secret of his success was that he added to his self-control patience.

(3) *Faith.*—Patience is not merely passive endurance; it contains also an ingredient of active service. A firm, bright, working faith in the moral government of God, and in the ultimate triumph of righteousness, girds the soul with quiet strength, and constitutes the ground of self-control; while the exercise of self-control in the very teeth of adverse circumstance issues in that reposefulness of spirit, that fine poise of disposition, which the word patience connotes.

¶ All lovers of literature are familiar with Richter's *Dream of the Universe*. You remember how, with a mighty angel for guide,

[1] B. Wilberforce, *Sanctification by the Truth*, 161.

he was launched without sound or farewell upon the infinite deeps of space. With the solemn flight of angel-wings they passed through Saharas of darkness, through wildernesses of death, separating worlds of life and light. On and on they flew, through starry fields and forests of gleaming suns, past rushing comets and wheeling planets and the changing splendours of a thousand waxing and waning moons. One heaven after another opened up before them as they approached, and rolled up behind them as they passed. System after system, galaxy after galaxy, constellation after constellation piled themselves up in awful altitudes, opened out into glittering corridors that dazzled the vision, and then faded into distance as they rushed on in never-ceasing flight. At length the human heart within the man was overburdened with infinity, and yearned for some narrow cell in which to hide. Turning to his attendant angel he cried, "Angel, I will go no farther, for the spirit of man acheth with this infinity. Let me lie down in the grave and hide me from the oppression of the infinite, for end I see there is none." Then from all the listening stars that shone around issued a choral voice, "End there is none." "Then," to quote the dreamer's own words, "the mighty Angel became invisible, or vanished to his home in the unseen world of spirit. I was left alone in the centre of a universe of life, and I yearned after some sympathizing being. Suddenly from the starry deeps there came floating through the ocean of light a certain planet. Upon it there stood a woman whose face was as the face of a Madonna, and by her side there stood a Child whose countenance varied not, neither was it magnified as it drew nearer. This Child was a King; for I saw He had a crown upon His head, but the crown was a crown of thorns. Then also I perceived that the planet was our unhappy earth; and as the earth drew near, this Child, who had come forth from the starry deeps to comfort me, threw upon me a look of gentlest pity and unutterable love, so that in my heart I had a sudden rapture of joy such as passes all understanding, and I woke in a tumult of happiness."

Now, under cover of this wonderful dream, Richter conveys the truth for which we are contending. If the soul of man is to have the patience to wait and the strength to endure, it must know that eternity is something more than infinite duration, and that immeasurable space is more than a vast and vacant solitude. Only let it be sure that all time and space are suffused with a Personal Presence, with a Mind that thinks and plans, and a Heart that feels and loves, then nothing will be too great to do, nothing too hard to bear. Let it doubt this, and it has no adequate inducement to hold on. Hence, as we have seen, it is

written of Moses, "he endured as seeing Him," not "it," but "*Him*" who is invisible; not a *somewhat* but a *Some one*, who upholds all things by the word of His power, but also redeems all souls by the word of His love.[1]

Thou gavest unto me
No sign! I knew no loving secret, told
As oft to men beloved, and I must hold
My peace when these would speak of converse high;
Jesus, my Master, yet I would be nigh
When these would speak, and in the words rejoice
Of them who listen to the Bridegroom's voice.
Thou gavest unto me
No goodly gift, no pearl of price untold,
No signet-ring, no ruby shut in gold,
No chain around my neck to wear for pride,
For love no token in my breast to hide;
Yea! these, perchance, from out my careless hold
Had slipped, perchance some robber shrewd and bold
Had snatched them from me! so Thou didst provide
For me, my Master kind, *from day to day*;
And in this world, Thine inn, Thou bad'st me stay,
And saidst,—"What thou spendest, I will pay."

I never heard Thee say,
"Bring forth the robe for this My son, the best;"
Thou gavest not to me, as unto guest
Approved, a festal mantle rich and gay;
Still singing, ever singing, in the cold
Thou leavest me, without Thy Door to stay;
Now the Night draweth on, the Day is old,
And Thou hast never said,—"Come in, My friend,"—
Yet once, yea twice, methinks Thy love did send
A secret message,—"Bless'd unto the end
Are they that love and they that still endure."
Jesus, my Saviour, take to Thee Thy poor,
Take home Thy humble friend.[2]

VI.

Godliness.

1. At first sight, the mentioning of this virtue just at this place seems hardly natural. In looking at the order in which the

[1] H. Howard, *The Summits of the Soul*, 47. [2] Dora Greenwell.

different attributes of character are named, and in looking for the *reasons* on which that order itself rests, one is rather surprised to find "godliness" put where it is. For a moment, it appears as if it would have come better at the beginning or at the end of the entire series; and the question occurs, whether indeed it is not included in that "faith" which lies at the basis of the spiritual structure. But "godliness" and "faith" are not identical; and though, in a certain general sense, the one may be said to be included in the other, seeing that "godliness" cannot exist without "faith," yet they are not so involved as to preclude their being clearly separated and distinguished, and placed, if needs be, with some space between them in a series like this. Faith is godliness in its principle, as light in the reason: godliness is faith in its actings, as love in the heart. The one flows from and is the utterance and development of the other. Godliness is faith *alive*; and not only alive, but active; not only looking and thinking, but feeling, speaking, doing, and thus infusing into all outward and visible performance a moral element that makes virtue holiness.

¶ Notice the place of godliness in the development of the Christian character. It is not one of the earliest graces, it comes in after much progress has been described. There is profound significance in this. In the beginnings of the Christian life, men are almost sure to be prayerful. The "exceeding great and precious promises" are in their hearts; the strain of penitence drives them to God; personal imperfection is bitterly felt; and they are compelled to pray for grace to live a better life. But when they have reached somewhat of excellency; when their will is disciplined, and pure desires are theirs; when they are at home in the study of the gospel; when they are self-possessed and patient; there is great danger of suffering from undevoutness. All their efforts are directed to self-culture, and they cease to pray. They have acquired power over themselves, and think less of God's help. And from this come barrenness and weakness. Gradually a change is evident; their heart grows hard, self-consciousness and pride destroy the sweetness of their life. For want of heavenly motive they are impatient; for want of heavenly aim they are self-indulgent. Many a time we have seen some of the most excellent of men—noble, wise, self-possessed, and patient—undergoing a sad and serious change. We notice a strange lack in them, something that is not harmonious with the general

elevation of their character. It is the want of devoutness. It makes them perhaps proud, or censorious, or wayward. And then begins a rapid deterioration; the want of godliness is fatal to spiritual advancement.

It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.

The little rift within the lover's lute,
Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

2. We lose the benefit of our patience, unless patience becomes a step to godliness. It is impossible to be godly without being patient; but it is quite possible to be patient without being godly: and the thing here taught is, that we are not to regard knowledge, temperance, and patience as the great things which God desires to see in us, but to know that these are to be cherished chiefly because they are the atmosphere in which godliness can exist.

¶ Is our patience simply a stoical endurance of what cannot be cured, opening up into no sweet and blessed intercourse with the loving Father whose children we are? Then indeed are we dwarfed growths, not without life, it may be, but it is life defeated and made retrogressive by being denied completion and defrauded of its flower and crown. In the course of this evolution, it is only by evolving to the next stage that we can render secure the stages already reached. Not to move forward is thus to move back. Not to grow up is to die down. Not to work salvation to a finish is to cancel our calling. "Wherefore," says St. Peter, "give the more diligence to making your calling and election sure."

3. There are three words which, taken separately, will give us some idea of the fulness of the grace of godliness—reverence, loyalty, godlikeness.

(1) The root-idea of godliness is *reverence*.—Because, as we have seen, patience is not a sullen submission but a glad upleaping to the Divine requirement, it passes naturally and by the laws of spiritual evolution into adoration of Him from whom it derives its staying power. That which we continually draw upon, and

never draw upon without satisfying response, cannot but command our grateful and adoring love. Through patience, then, thought and feeling are carried up to their highest, till they prostrate themselves in lowly reverence at the feet of Him "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

(2) The Greek conception in the word translated "godliness" is *loyalty*.—Thus it was understood by the Athenians centuries before it was used by the Apostle Peter. That it is charged with a deeper and fuller significance when employed in the New Testament we admit. Nevertheless this is the fundamental idea, and it signifies the adjustment of the life to a higher order, the tuning of the purpose to a loftier strain, the ranging of the affections around a new centre, and the direction of the powers to nobler and grander, because unselfish, ends. There is, then, no higher thing than duty. To it everything must bow; in its performance no human relationship, however binding, no, not even human life itself, must be taken into account. The supreme test of Christian discipleship is unquestioning loyalty to Jesus Christ, and it will be for ever true that he who loses his life for the sake of Christ and duty, will find it enlarged, enriched, and ennobled a hundredfold in the light beyond the veil.

(3) Godliness is simply *godlikeness*.—There are features of character which belong exclusively to God, in which man can never become like God. For God is unique. He is the Source of all power; He is eternal, He is almighty, He is present everywhere. And finite beings can never resemble Him in these respects. But the mere infinite of quantity has nothing to do with moral and spiritual attributes. We may be like God in patience, we may be like Him in love. "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." We may become like God in His love to men, in His patience and forbearance with men, in His hopefulness for them, and in His toil and labour for them, as He strives to win them for Himself, and to make them make themselves fit for the Kingdom of God.

¶ This new rank carries with it new and corresponding obligations. St. Peter reminds us that we are the children of the Highest, in order that he may create within us the sense of

noblesse oblige. Our conceptions of the new life, its scope and scale, its relations and responsibilities, must necessarily react on conduct. We cannot live it nobly unless we think of it grandly. We must remember our high origin if we would not fail of our great destiny. Let us challenge with the poet any philosophy of life that would lower its dignity or degrade its rank. We are not

> Cunning casts in clay:
> Let Science prove we are, and then
> What matters Science unto men,
> At least to me? I would not stay.
>
> Let him, the wiser man who springs
> Hereafter, up from childhood shape
> His action like the greater ape,
> But I was *born* to other things.[1]

VII.

Brotherly-Love.

Brotherly-love is the love of the brotherhood, "the household of faith." It is the fraternal or family affection of Christianity which unites together, or ought to unite, all those who profess to regard themselves as "heirs together of the grace of life." Christians are represented as the "sons and daughters of God Almighty"; as "members one of another";—as, "in the Lord," "brothers" and "sisters";—as united in *Him* from whom "the whole family in heaven and in earth is named";—as constituting His "Body," and as so pervaded by a common consciousness and a common sentiment, that "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." The feeling that comes next to the love of God is, or ought to be, the love of godlike men.

1. *In love of the brethren there are no distinctions.*—This love is without partiality. In Christ, so far as thorough interest and sympathy are concerned, natural and artificial distinctions are superseded; "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is

[1] H. Howard, *The Summits of the Soul*, 59.

all, and in all." He makes each like the others by making all like Himself. He requires, therefore, mutual recognition and love —*family*-love, where there is family-likeness. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" "Let him that saith he loves God, see to it that he love his brother also."

¶ Some ladies in the city had established an infant school in the district of Billingsgate, and finding themselves quite unsuccessful in persuading the people to send their children to it, applied to Irving to help them. When they came to the second house, he took the office of spokesman upon himself. "When the door was opened, he spoke in the kindest tone to the woman who opened it, and asked permission to go in. He then explained the intention of the ladies, asked how many children she had, and whether she would send them. A ready consent was the result; and the mother's heart was completely won when the visitor took one of her little ones on his knee, and blessed her." The city ladies were confounded. They had honestly intended to benefit the poor, very, very distantly related to them by way of Adam and the forgotten patriarchs—but the cheerful brotherhood of the man who had blessed the bread of the starving Glasgow weavers was as strange to them as if he had spoken Hebrew instead of English.[1]

2. *Brotherly-love may be shown by solicitude for union among all Christians*—the mutual recognition and intercommunion of Churches; and by earnest endeavour to help forward whatever seems likely to secure such a result.

¶ On his holidays he delighted to attend little chapels, and he enjoyed the homely addresses of the lay preachers. One day a farmer was preaching in a Methodist chapel where Watson often worshipped, and at the conclusion of his sermon said, "Why do I preach Sunday after Sunday? Because I cannot eat my bread alone." Watson shook him warmly by the hand after the service, and said later, "I count that one of the greatest conclusions to a sermon I have ever heard—he could not eat his bit of bread alone."[2]

[1] Mrs. Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, i. 230.
[2] W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ian Maclaren*, 325.

3. *It is manifested best in daily acts that involve self-denial.*—It is seen in little rather than in great things—by what is the spontaneous outcome of habitual feeling rather than by acts which are done from a sense of remembered duty. It is to make itself felt as a perpetual presence; a thing cheerful and genial as light, but which is not thought of, noticed, or spoken about, unless something should suddenly disturb or interrupt it, like a dark cloud deforming the day. The Saviour, after His beautifully symbolic act of washing His disciples' feet, hastened, lest they should lose the practical lesson in their wonder at His condescending love, to uncover and lay bare the working principle which the acted parable was intended to convey. "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me, Master, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you." Then, gathering up His whole philosophy of life into a single pregnant phrase, He said, "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them." It is this blending of knowing and doing that constitutes the ideal life.

¶ There was a medical student a year or two ago, who was half way through his course, when it dawned upon him that he had lived for himself, and he decided to change and go and see if he could find any one to help. And he found an old chum who had gone to the dogs. He had fallen to pieces, given up his work and his exams., and was living aloof from other students and drinking hard. No. 1 went and found him lying on the floor drunk. He paid his debts and took him to his own rooms, gave him supper, and put him to bed. On the next day he had a talk with him. He produced a piece of paper, and they made a contract to keep them both straight:—

(1) Neither of us to go out alone.
(2) Twenty minutes only to be allowed to go to the college and return: overtime to be accounted for.
(3) One hour every night to be given over to reading other than studies.
(4) That byegones be byegones.

Both men put their names to this, and for weeks they lived, No. 1 paying and doing all he could to help No. 2. After a time No. 2 saw that the odd evening hour was spent by No. 1 in reading his Bible. No. 1 never spoke to him about it; he simply

sat and read. Ay, gentlemen, I tell you that was a fine sermon. He never spoke *about* Religion; but he spoke Religion. He was teaching the brotherhood of man and the life of Christ. Now No. 2 was learning unconsciously to know God. Why? Because God is Love—No. 1 loved him; and Christ is Sacrifice—No. 1 sacrificed his life for him. Not a word was said. At last No. 2 changed. What he changed to I need not say. The last I heard of them was this. No. 1 is filling an appointment of great importance in London. No. 2 passed his exams. that year with the highest University distinction, and is now in private practice.[1]

4. *Brotherly-love is a test of character.*—For the love of the brotherhood is the love of a man because he is a man in Christ. It is a great test of Christian character to be able to discern the likeness to Christ in a man, and to love that and nothing else but that in him. For there may be much in Christians that may be unattractive. Some of them may be censorious, or in other ways disagreeable. It is something to be able to neglect all these elements of repulsion, and to see the root of the matter in an imperfect Christian, and love it. Then how great a thing it is to love the brotherhood simply because of the likeness to Christ in them, and to love them the more, the more they are like Christ. No wonder though this is placed high in the unfolding of faith.

¶ Shortly after this, I was greatly refreshed by the visit of an American whaler, the *Camden Packet*, under Captain Allan. He, his chief officer, and many of his double company of seamen were decided Christians—a great contrast to most of the Traders that had called at Port Resolution. The Captain cordially invited me on board to preach and conduct a religious service. That evening I enjoyed exceedingly—wells in the desert! The Captain introduced me, saying,—

"This is my ship's company. The first officer and most of my men are real Christians, trying to love and serve Jesus Christ. We have been three years out on this voyage, and are very happy with each other. You would never hear or see worse on board of this vessel than you see now. And God has given us gratifying success."

He afterwards told me that he had a very valuable cargo of sperm oil on board, the vessel being nearly filled up with it. He was eager to leave supplies, or do something for me, but I needed

[1] G. A. Smith, *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 475.

nothing that he could give. His mate, on examining my boat, found a hole in her, and several planks split and bulged in, as I had gone down on a reef with her when out on Mission work, and narrowly escaped drowning. Next morning, the Captain, of his own accord, set his carpenter to repair the boat, and left it as good as new. Not one farthing of recompense would any of them take from me; their own Christian love rewarded them, in the circumstances. I had been longing for a chance to send it to Sydney for repairs, and felt deeply thankful for such unexpected and generous aid. The Captain would not admit that the delay was any loss to him—his boats spending the day in purchasing cocoa-nuts and provisions from the Natives for his own ship. Oh, how the Christlike spirit knits together all true followers of Christ What other earthly or human tie could have so bound that stranger to me? In the heart of Christ we met as brothers.[1]

VIII.

Love.

Love here signifies philanthropy,—universal love; the love of humanity, of all mankind, as distinct from, or additional to, the peculiar domestic affection of the Church. Lest "the love of the brotherhood" should degenerate into a selfish and sectarian thing, —a narrow, exclusive, unamiable sentiment,—the Apostle directs that it is to flow beyond the walls of the sacred enclosure, or rather to have added to it another sentiment that will do this, and that thus the Christian is to acknowledge in every man one that has claims on his soul and service.

¶ I remember when I was in Japan, on one occasion travelling along the bank of a river which had been swollen by the great floods, and there was a poor beggar who tried to cross from the other side, within reach by rope or by wading of thirty or forty strong men. I did not see him go into the river, but from my palanquin I saw in the middle of the flood an arm rising out of the water and the next a foot and the next a pile of rags, as it seemed to me, and I asked my interpreter, a cultivated and refined Japanese, what it was. "Oh," he said, "that is a beggar!" "Well, why don't those men help him?" "Oh, he's only a beggar." "Well," I said, "what if he is, why don't they help him?" They looked at the beggar just as you and I would look on a piece of

[1] *John G. Paton*, i. 203.

floating wood, and they let him drown. And in a moment or two there was nothing but a mass of rags, with now and then a hand or foot standing up, being swept down to the ocean. That was within twenty-five feet of a strong party of able-bodied men! Why didn't they help him? Were they cruel? No. Do not the Japanese love their children? Yes. Do not they love humanity? Yes, in a certain way. But they always have this feeling that if a man is in difficulty, and there is not much chance for him, let him go, unless he is their brother or relation. If he is a beggar or a man below them they never think of helping him. Times have changed since Christianity came there. That is what I saw, and I bear witness to the truth which I believe, that the love of man, simply because he is a man, does not exist outside of Christendom. I may be mistaken, but I believe I am speaking the truth.[1]

1. *Love, then, is the final and fullest expression of spiritual force;* but it is not love as a mere emotion. Hence it is independent of all reciprocity. It is a principle of beneficence, and, being a principle, is not subject to spasm or caprice. It holds on through all weathers and through all moods. This is the characteristic of a principle as distinguished from a policy. A policy changes with changing conditions; a principle holds on undeviatingly, admitting of no change. Look at the principle of honesty. It does not relax under one set of conditions and stiffen under another. It does not fluctuate with the temperature or become keener with the thermometer at 80° than at 100°. A man of business integrity does not wrong others because they wrong him. He has no preferential creditors, and is not more honest to his butcher than to his tailor. In like manner, love, as a principle of conduct, is absolutely superior to all circumstances.

¶ Love. What shall we call it? The root of roots, the seed of seeds, the sap of saps, the juice of juices. Love is first and last. When I have love, I have everything: without love I am nothing. Love is all faith, all hope. Love is like the earth—everything comes out of her, everything returns to her again. She is the mother and nurse of all the graces. What love is, it is hard to say: for those who have it, needless to tell; for those who have it not, impossible.[2]

2. *Its example, as its inspiration, is in Christ.*—Christ's love is like no other love; it goes down to those that are outside the

[1] W. E. Griffis.

[2] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 1.

pale of loveliness. Human love can seek only her own, can love only that which is like herself. Man seeks fellowship with him that has a kindred soul. He goes out to meet the heart that is already in sympathy with his heart, he gives back to his brother what his brother has given to him. But Divine love transcends the limits of its own sympathies. It seeks those that are not yet brethren; it goes forth to *make* brotherhood. It keeps not on the plain of its own being; it descends into the valleys to seek and to save that which is lost. It travels down into the depths to bring up that which as yet has no affinity to itself. It follows the prodigals afar off, it searches out the lepers amid the tombs, it gathers in the outcasts from the highways and the hedges; it seeks those who are not beautiful, that it may endow them with its beauty.

¶ Paul says that this element in his Lord's character passes knowledge (Eph. iii. 19), and he is never weary of exalting it. To no element in the character of Jesus does he refer so frequently, and to none does he ascribe so great importance in the work of redemption. In his thought the love of Jesus was nothing less than the love of God. To see it and know it was to see and know the very love of the invisible Father. Thus he says that *God* commends His love toward us in that *Christ* died (Rom. v. 8), and that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. viii. 39). That is to say, in dying for the ungodly, Christ manifested the love of God for men. In Jesus, and especially in the last act of His life, we have an historical visible embodiment of the love of God the invisible.

This love is measured by the fact that Jesus laid down His life for the ungodly (Rom. v. 8), and this measure is too great for any human love. The utmost that human love attains unto is to die for the righteous and good (Rom. v. 7). The love of Jesus transcends the utmost of human love, in that Jesus died for the *ungodly*. Thus it was the cross which taught Paul that in the love of Jesus we see the very love of God. It shows the Divine character of His love, because it exhibits it as pure self-sacrifice. Jesus gave *Himself* in contrast to aught that He possessed. He gave Himself to suffer the utmost of pain and shame; and He gave Himself thus for His *enemies*. This love is none other than the love of God. Hence Paul thinks of this as the perfect *standard* of love for the kingdom of heaven (Eph. v. 2, 25, 29). It is the ideal beyond which the human mind cannot rise. And because this love is manifested in a supreme act of sacrifice in

behalf of each man, it becomes the all-controlling *motive* in life (Gal. ii. 20; Rom. viii. 37).[1]

¶ There are many who are drawn to Christ by His love—drawn to Him, not because they are conscious either of moral weakness which His love is eager to strengthen, or of sin which His love is willing to forgive, or of unintelligible cravings which His love is able to satisfy—but by the love itself. They are drawn to Him as if by the force of moral and spiritual gravitation. Children, especially—if I may judge from my own observation—are drawn to Christ in this way. Whether the opinion is sound which is held by very many persons just now, that in nearly all cases it is the love of Christ that originates religious thought and life, seems to me very doubtful. That the opinion should be a common one is explicable; for whatever may have first awakened religious earnestness, there must be an apprehension of the love of Christ before it is possible to have faith in Him; but this is no proof that the truths and facts which created the religious solicitude were superfluous. And yet it is certain that if we could preach about the love of Christ with the ardour, the exultation, and the rapture which it ought to inspire, there would be something contagious in our faith and joy; if we could preach about it with a tenderness like that which He Himself manifested to the weak and the sorrowful and the sinful, the hearts of men would be melted by it.[2]

3. *It is full of wise discernment.*—Love always distinguishes between the person and his sin, just as a doctor distinguishes between a patient and his disease. He never by any chance identifies them. He fights the disease with a vigour, a continuity, and a relentlessness that knows no cessation and gives no quarter; but he never confounds the personality of the patient with the pathology of his disease. If you could penetrate to the innermost sacrarium of even the most depraved man you would find that which would join with you in condemning his sinful courses, and take sides with you against the wrong that he has done. This separability of the sin from the sinner is clear to the eye of love, and this it is that gives hopefulness to the task of rescue and reform.

Warm
Beneath the veriest ash, there hides a spark of soul
Which, quickened by love's breath, may yet pervade the whole.[3]

[1] G. H. Gilbert, *The First Interpreters of Jesus*, 14.

[2] R. W. Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, 208.

[3] Browning.

¶ I was reading the other day a sensible and appreciative review of Mr. Lucas's new biography of Charles Lamb. The reviewer quoted with cordial praise Mr. Lucas's remark—referring, of course, to the gin-and-water, which casts, I fear, in my own narrow view, something of a sordid shadow over Lamb's otherwise innocent life—"A man must be very secure in his own righteousness who would pass condemnatory judgment upon Charles Lamb's only weakness." I do not myself think this a sound criticism. We ought not to abstain from condemning the weakness, we must abstain from condemning Charles Lamb. His beautiful virtues, his tenderness, his extraordinary sweetness and purity of nature, far outweigh this weakness. But what are we to do? Are we to ignore, to condone, to praise the habit? Are we to think the better of Charles Lamb and love him more because he tippled? Would he not have been more lovable without it?[1]

4. *It is not merely emotional but also practical.*—This love towards men—of men, *as men*—the entire race, as it exists immediately in the neighbourhood of the Church, or fills "the habitable parts of the earth" in all lands—is not, as a Christian sentiment, to be a bit of barren though beautiful idealism, a vague, philosophic glow of "fraternity," a feeling that utters itself in no deeds of valiant endeavour to better the world, but only in grand, eloquent talk—talk, too, it may be, about anything but men's *highest* interests, or even in flat contravention of such. It is not to be this, but a really deep, earnest, intense thing, as to its nature, and a real, effective doer of work, as to its expression.

¶ Love, such as Christ's law speaks of, never asks the question, "Who is my neighbour?" Love's question, if Love asks questions at all, is, "How can I show myself neighbourly?" Love does not inquire, "Whom ought I to help?"—it inquires, "How can I best be a helper?" It does not look narrowly and grudgingly and fearfully round, trying to find out who the others are who may have claims on it. Its eyes are turned inward upon itself, saying, "What will make me more fit to serve?"[2]

> Love came to me with a crown,
> I took it and laid it down.
>
> Love came to me and said,
> "Wear it upon thy head."

[1] A. C. Benson, *From a College Window*, 211.
[2] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 104.

"'Tis too heavy, I cannot wear it,
I have not strength enough to bear it."

Then my soul's belovèd spake,
Saying, "Wear it for my sake."
When lo! the crown of love grew light,
And I wore it in all men's sight.[1]

[1] Ella Dietz.

Growth.

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GROWTH.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—2 Pet. iii. 18.

1. THROUGHOUT the New Testament Christian character is regarded as a growth. Sometimes the growth is architectural—the growth of the building; sometimes it is physiological, Christ being the head, and we growing up into Him in all things; sometimes it is generic growth, as in the case of the vine which brings forth more and more fruit under pruning and culture. The idea of a developing life runs through the whole New Testament, and has every variety of exemplification.

¶ The capacity of growth is that which, more than anything else, distinguishes one mind from another.[1]

2. Here we are told to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Now the text does not mean, grow into the grace, or into the knowledge. It means, being in grace—grow; being in knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ—grow. That is clear when we read verse 17 as well as verse 18. "Ye therefore, beloved, *knowing* these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "Beware lest ye fall," that is the negative command. The positive command is, "*Knowing* these things . . . grow in the grace and knowledge." You are in the grace, in the knowledge! Grow!

The figure is that of infancy advancing to the full stature of manhood. The gods of the ancients were born full-grown. Minerva is said to have sprung all armed and panoplied from the forehead of Jove. But Christians begin as babes in Christ and

[1] John Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 27.

advance through certain conditions of normal growth to the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

¶ You hold in your hand a "corn of wheat," and you know there are in that seed untold possibilities. It is planted, it germinates, rises from the tomb of darkness to the light of day, and steadily advances to golden fruitfulness. There is first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. By culture you draw out the mysterious forces of the seed, call to higher energy its potencies of life, and so bring the seed to fuller manifestation of its latent and dormant powers. So the soul is a seed of undeveloped possibilities. There are in it high powers and faculties, mysterious and immeasurable energies of life, that may be developed, but may remain in the germ, may lie unawakened, or may be irregularly or only imperfectly developed. In the soul there are wonderful possibilities of aspiration and humility, of courage and faith, of wisdom and prayerfulness, of holiness and service; and the education of the soul means the calling forth by judicious culture of all these various powers and qualities to their harmonious and effective operation and co-operation. In this way the soul comes to itself, to blessed self-realization.

I.

The Kind of Growth Commended.

"*Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.*" These are the qualities in which we are to grow. They are the starting-point and goal of the Christian life. They are exhibited in their fulness in Jesus Christ, and if we are vitally united to Him we shall grow into His likeness.

1. What is *grace*? The root of the Greek word is a verb which means to rejoice, or be glad. Grace is that which makes the heart glad with pure gladness; the grace of God, the grace of Jesus, is the graciousness, the gentleness, the harmony of life in God and in His Son. You speak to a graceful person—you cannot define the grace that is in him; but it is something which gives more than satisfaction, it gives pleasure; you recognize a spiritual thing even when you see it in the human form, yet more when you see it in the gracious acts of one man or one woman towards another. There is harmony between the being of the one and the being of the other—the recognition by the one of the same nature

and the same needs in the other; and the same readiness to be met, to be pleased, or to be hurt; to be sorrowful or glad; the submission of the one nature to the demands of the other nature —that is grace, that is graciousness.

We have, first, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the undeserved love and favour which God in Jesus Christ bears to us sinful and inferior creatures; and, next, we have the consequence of that love and favour in the manifold spiritual endowments which in us become "graces," beauties and excellences of Christian character. So, then, one who is a Christian ought to be continually realizing a deeper and more blessed consciousness of Christ's love and favour and manifesting it in his life.

Thus the word "grace" sums up the manifold Divine gifts, gifts of the grace of God—the gift of holiness, the gift of love to God and love to man, the gift of spiritual energy. All the blossoming aspirations, all the budding spiritual hopes, all the ripening fruits of holy endeavour are due to the Divine life within, are through the grace of God in Christ. As the sun shines forth in his radiant strength, thaws the frozen earth, and causes the seed to spring up, the leaves and fruit to appear, so when the sun of God's grace shines upon the soul, then in the soul will increasingly appear those graces that are an image, however faint, of the Divine grace; and holiness and righteousness and love will "grow from more to more," manifesting themselves in purer beauty, richer fruitfulness, and nobler power.

¶ By grace Jansen simply meant the birth of a religious sense. This may be strong, or it may be weak; but even its humblest forms are enough to distinguish him who has it from those who have it not—to draw all his actions into a new perspective, and put a different colouring on all his thoughts. In other words, it involves a radical change of character; and, as such a change is beyond man's power to effect, grace must descend upon him like a whirlwind—as once it descended on Jansen's two spiritual heroes, St. Augustine and St. Paul—and draw his will "irresistibly, unfailingly, victoriously," out of darkness into light.[1]

¶ The Rev. Adam Lind, minister of the United Presbyterian Church, Elgin, writes: "For some time after coming to Elgin, Brownlow North lived in great retirement, deeply engrossed with his Bible, and abounding in private prayer. I saw him occasion-

[1] Viscount St. Cyres, *Pascal*, 84.

ally, and had ample opportunities of observing the workings of his mind; and the mark of true grace which struck me first in his case was the spirit of profound humility, penitence, and adoring gratitude. He seemed like one unable to get out of the region of wonder and amazement at the sovereign kindness of that benignant Being who had borne with him so long in his sin, and such sin, and so much sin; and not only borne with him, but shielded him, and held him back from self-ruin, at length arresting him in his career of folly and wickedness, and bringing him to Himself, a pardoned penitent, a returned prodigal."[1]

¶ The grace of God in the heart of man very soon betrays its presence. It is the imparting to the soul of the mind of Christ, which desires the welfare of our brother as well as the glory of our God. In its own nature it is expansive and communicative. It is like light, whose property it is to shine; like salt, whose nature it is to communicate to foreign substances its saltness, like seed, which ever seeks to reproduce itself; like water, which, descending from above into an earthly heart, becomes therein a well of water springing up to everlasting life. These are not accidents; they are essential properties of grace wherever found. The soul that was dead, when made alive is made a new centre, source, and spring of life amid a world of death. Christians are this world's light amid its night, and this world's salt amid its putrefaction, and this world's springs of living water in its wastes of barrenness, and the seed which yet shall fill the world's face with its fruit. Life loves to work, and where there is no work there is no life, or only weak and dying life.[2]

2. What does the *knowledge* of Christ mean? The knowledge of Christ means such a sympathetic entering into the springs and motive forces of His life as shall, by its gradual increase, lead us into the perfection of spiritual life.

To know more of Jesus is to know more of God and more of life in its relations to Him. Many religions that have not Christ in them have given their followers a caricature of God. The life of Jesus is a reflection of God. And it is by knowing more of Him that we learn what things God approves—what spirit on our part, and what actions. We cannot make right advancement towards the ideal life, unless we gain more and more knowledge of Him whose character is ideal, and whose gospel is constructive in the highest sense.

[1] K. Moody-Stuart, *Brownlow North*, 38. [2] *Ibid.* 49.

To know Christ is thus to know God truly; it is to recognize His hand in all the dispensations of Providence, to know Him in His works, to read His handwriting in the fabric of the earth and the heavens, to feel His love in His dealings with us, to imprint His love upon our hearts by translating it into love for man also; and then in the spirit of this double love to examine ourselves, and learn to understand the intricacies of our own heart; to discover, and without weariness to combat, its selfishness and lurking pride; day by day, and hour after hour, to labour without ceasing for the expulsion of its envyings, jealousies, and sensual lusts; to get the mastery over the tongue, the eyes, the ears; to subdue sloth, peevishness, and anger; in forgetfulness of self, to serve our neighbour with real interest and ardour; and finally to order all our domestic concerns and cares with painstaking devotion to God's holy will.

¶ I stand with a great artist before a famous picture. I make bold, in my ignorance of art, to confess that I can see nothing extraordinary in it at all. "What," exclaims my companion, somewhat indignantly but with great enthusiasm, "don't you observe the splendid manipulation," and he launches forth into a glowing analysis of the picture before us. While he is explaining I can discern more clearly than I did before what made the picture famous in the eyes of others, but yet at the close I have to exclaim, "Well, my friend, I have no doubt I would speak as you have done if I had your eyes, but I confess I don't see what makes you so enthusiastic. I should much like, however, to possess your knowledge and enthusiasm, and shall be glad if you will only show me how." "There is only one way of possessing the knowledge," replies my companion; "you must begin to learn the first elements of drawing and colouring, and as you make progress in the acquisition of the art of painting *you will know.*" Without striving to grow in the graces of the painter's pencil, you will never understand the feelings of the painter himself.[1]

II.

The Naturalness of Growth.

1. Growth is dependent upon life and health. Grant these conditions, and it follows naturally and without effort. If these be absent there can be no growth.

[1] W. Skinner.

(1) It is dependent on *life*.—We may sometimes use the word somewhat carelessly in relation to matters which are devoid of life, but, strictly speaking, it always indicates the presence of life. Boys at their play in winter-time will take a small snowball, and, rolling it in the snow, will watch it becoming larger and larger, until one boy says, See how it grows! No, it is not growing. That is not growth. That is enlargement by accretion from without. Growth is enlargement by development from within. The principle of life is necessary to growth. When the Apostle charges us in his Epistle to "grow in grace" he presupposes the presence of life, and it is of the utmost importance that we emphasize that fact. There can be no growth in Christian character save where the Christ-life exists. The man who is born anew can grow in grace. The man who has not received the gift of life cannot grow. Growth in grace is not the result of the imitation of Christ in the power of the human will. It is the result of the propelling force of the Christ-life in the soul.

(2) If growth is dependent on life it is equally dependent upon *health*.—Wherever there is arrest of development in the Christian life it is due to the fact that the life principle of Jesus Christ is not active and dominant. Some part of the life—the intellect, the emotion, the will, the chamber of the imagination, the palace of the affection, or the seat of thought—is not wholly handed over to the indwelling Christ, is not answering the call of His life, is not responding to its claims. The tides of that life are excluded from some part of the being, and the result is spiritual disease. The spiritual faculties become atrophied. They cannot work. Then follows arrest of development. But granted the full rushing tide of the Christ-life in all the departments of the believer's life, granted the presence and dominance of that life in all the complex mystery of his being, then he is in health, and his growth is steady and sure.

¶ I saw an uncommon instance both of the justice and mercy of God. Abraham Jones, a serious, thinking man, about fifty years of age, was one of the first members of the society in London, and an early witness of the power of God to forgive sins. He then stood as a pillar for several years, and was a blessing to all that were round about him, till growing wise in his own eyes, he saw this and the other person wrong, and was almost continually

offended. He then grew colder and colder, till, at length, in order to renew his friendship with the world, he went (which he had refused to do for many years) to a parish feast, and stayed there till midnight. Returning home perfectly sober, just by his own door he fell down and broke his leg. When the surgeon came he found the bone so shattered in pieces that it could not be set. Then it was, when he perceived he could not live, that the terrors of the Lord again came about him. I found him in great darkness of soul, owning the just hand of God. We prayed for him, in full confidence that God would return. And He did in part reveal Himself again; he had many gleams of hope and love, till, in two or three days, his soul was required of him.

So awful a providence was immediately known to all the society, and contributed not a little to the awakening them that slept, and stirring up those that were faint in their mind.[1]

2. Growth is spontaneous; it does not come by anxiety or effort. A doctor has no prescription for growth. He can tell you how growth may be stunted or impaired, but the process itself is recognized as beyond control—one of the few, and therefore very significant, things which Nature keeps in her own hands. No physician of souls, in like manner, has any prescription for spiritual growth. It is the question he is most often asked and most often answers wrongly. He may prescribe more earnestness, more prayer, more self-denial, or more Christian work. These are prescriptions for something, but not for growth. Not that they may not encourage growth; but the soul grows as the lily grows, without trying, without fretting, without ever thinking.

¶ I remember, ten years ago, when I first set my face to the other side of the sea, my boy, six years of age, said to me as he bade me good-bye, "How long shall you be away?" I told him two months. He said, "I am going to try hard to grow as big as you are before you come back." I am not sure that he tried. I suspect he forgot, as children do so blessedly forget their follies. But if he did try, he did not succeed. No child grows by effort. No man "by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature." Growth in Christian stature is never the result of effort. Granted life and holiness, then there will be growth and development.[2]

[1] *The Journal of John Wesley* (Standard Edition), iii. 449.

[2] G. Campbell Morgan, *The Simple Things of the Christian Life*, 58.

¶ Much work is done on board a ship crossing the Atlantic. Yet none of it is spent on making the ship go. The sailor but harnesses his vessel to the wind. He puts his sail and rudder in position, and lo, the miracle is wrought. So everywhere God creates, man utilizes. All the work of the world is merely a taking advantage of energies already there. God gives the wind, and the water, and the heat; man but puts himself in the way of the wind, fixes his water-wheel in the way of the river, puts his piston in the way of the steam; and so holding himself in position before God's Spirit, all the energies of Omnipotence course within his soul. He is like a tree planted by a river whose leaf is green and whose fruits fail not.[1]

3. And yet this growth is commanded. The will is involved. And the fact that it is a command teaches us that we are not to take this one metaphor as if it exhausted the whole of the facts of the case in reference to Christian progress. You would never think of telling a child to grow any more than you would think of telling a plant to grow, but Peter does tell Christian men and women to grow. Why? Because they are not plants, but men with wills which can resist, and can either further or hinder their progress.

> Lo! in the middle of the wood,
> The folded leaf is wooed from out the bud,
> . . . . . and there
> Grows green and broad, and takes no care.

But that is not how we grow. The desire of the soul to be like Christ, the constant longing to imitate Him, the imagination ever picturing Him, the emotions ever clinging to Him, the will ever gladly obedient to Him—all this if cherished must naturally and inevitably lead to Christian growth. We can resolve to wish and long for an object until it becomes in us the supreme, uncontrollable desire, a mighty and commanding passion, a passion which, like Aaron's rod, shall swallow up all competitors; and when Christ is that object—a living, present Christ—then we easily and gladly declare: "I do not live, Christ lives in me"; "I count all things but loss that I may know Him and be like Him." Any man can form the wish and cherish the desire, for the Holy Fire ever waits to kindle each living soul. And we can either try to make the spark burn, or we can put it out, or let it die.

[1] H. Drummond, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, 140.

¶ Two children resolved to share the night between them in watching by a mother's sick-bed. The command to each of them was most imperative: whatever else they did they were not to let the fire go out, and not to make the room too heated; life depended on their watchful obedience; ample fuel was close by for each. The first, a thoughtful, loving nature, watched and fed that fire with unsleeping vigilance. The second made the fire up once, and with morning light slept, neglected it, and let it go out, with a fatal issue. Your heart is the hearth, prepared to receive the Holy Fire; the fuel is abundant; the command is imperative that you feed life's spiritual flame and force. Neglect, want of interest, or unsuitable fuel are the secret of life's spiritual coldness, poverty, and death.[1]

4. Growth is of course a gradual process. The great change from sin to righteousness is not the work of a day, but the slow and patient process of a lifetime. There may seem to be no progress as measured by the eye; but the soul comes to its maturity as the babe becomes a man—fed and furthered by the experience of the moment, and helped by the grace of God to grow.

¶ What does moral perfection *begin* in? It begins in the disposition, in the will, in the heart. If you are urged to escape from polar winter, with its ice, and snow, and frost, and barrenness, to tropical summer, with its warmth, and flowers, and geniality, and luxuriance, is it meant that you are to accomplish the journey at one long stride, or that it is to be completed step by step, little by little? When a child is required to become perfect as a musician, is it intended that in one day his uncrafty fingers shall liberate the angel-strains that are jailed in the musical instrument? Or is it meant that he shall master the gamut, and grope his way through the scale, and gently touch the unknown notes to ascertain, as if by a whisper, whether they are the strains of which he is in quest, and proceed with all diligence and zeal until the instrument shall tell all its secrets, and shake with many-voiced delight at the touch of his friendly hand? Were you to tell an acorn to become perfect as an oak, would you mean that all the growing was to be completed in a night, or that the development was to proceed gradually, unfolding branch after branch, bud after bud, leaf after leaf, till it became a great cathedral-tree, in which the feathered choristers should pour out their songs in the hearing of God? It is even so with our Saviour. When He tells us to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect,

[1] R. H. Lovell, *First Types of the Christian Life*, 271.

He means that we are to *grow* in grace; we are to "press toward the mark"; we are to set our faces toward the holy temple.[1]

¶ While coarse growths are apt to be rapid, all fine growths are apt to be slow, and come up through a long process of ministration and development. The reed grows, as it were, in a day; but the sweetest things in my garden weary me with the tardiness of their maturing. The warmth of many suns must wait on them, and the moisture of many tranquil nights must coax them, before they feel bold enough to expose their inner life to the gaze of sun and stars, or the touch of the gentle winds. So it is with soul life. No one day answers for its growth. No single benefaction, coming with swift and sudden motion, matures it. It groweth after the growth of one that hath all eternity to grow in. The food on which it feeds comes to its mouth, not as by the hand of a special gift, but by the hand of a provision furnished by a benevolence which is general and for ever attentive. My soul takes of God's ministrations by grace, as my body takes of His administrations by nature. I know that while the body lasts nature will feed it. I know that while my soul endures God's grace shall supply its every need. I ask no more for my garden than that the sun shall continue to shine.[2]

5. We cannot lay down any fixed and rigid rule for the order of this growth. We may not say, for instance, that in every case the new life begins with contrition, and then passes through faith and assurance of forgiveness to perfect peace. No such rigid and uniform rule as this is laid down in Scripture. We may as well say beforehand in what order the leaves in spring should burst out upon the budding trees. In every true child of God all the phases of spiritual life will surely display themselves, but not all in the same order. In some the new life may begin in tears and agonies of sorrow, and pass on into smiles of joy and peace; in others it may begin in quiet and peaceful trust and happy service, to be disturbed, it may be ere long, with deep contrition for sin, begotten not of fear but of love. It is the height of presumption to attempt to limit the manner of the Spirit's working, or to judge of His presence by any other test than the presence of the work of the Spirit, the conformity to the image of Christ. Wherever there is a Christ-like soul, there is Christ and the Spirit of Christ; wherever there is not this likeness, then, be the feeling or

[1] J. Parker. [2] W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, 301.

emotion ever so strong, or ever so strictly according to the prescribed rule, there Christ is not.

¶ Life claims freedom; true freedom is life true to itself and its source. Every generation of men, like every year in nature, has its own independent characteristics. Every generation likes to hear its own accent; to hold up its own "earthen vessel" for the blessing which comes from above; to see the truth with its own eyes, and tell the vision in its own way. But the great facts contained in the message, and in those who receive it, are identical from year to year—human sin that has to be repented of, and Divine grace that is to be thankfully taken. There is nothing creative in the varying dialectics of the generations. It is faith that, in its essence, cannot alter which brings the power from God. Reason merely sifts and sorts: it has no originality, no creative power. What served Dr. Kidd's generation must serve ours. Nature is permanent in its principles and forces, though its aspects vary: so is Grace.[1]

No harsh transitions Nature knows,
No dreary spaces intervene;
Her work in silence forward goes,
And rather felt than seen:

For where the watcher, who with eye
Turned eastward, yet could ever say
When the faint glooming in the sky
First lightened into day?

And happy, happy shalt thou be,
If from this hour with just increase
All good things shall grow up in thee,
By such unmarked degrees;

For the full graces of thy prime
Shall, in their weak beginnings, be
Lost in an unremembered time
Of holy infancy.[2]

III.

The Requisites of Growth.

1. *The first requisite of growth is vital force.*—A plant cannot grow unless it is rooted in its native element. Many plants get

[1] J. Stark, *Dr. Kidd of Aberdeen*, 94.

[2] Trench, *Poems*, 23.

all their food from the air, through leaf and branch, and yet if you cut the root the plant withers and dies, not for the want of food, but for want of that living touch with the ground by which it receives its power to live. What that vital force is no one knows; we know some of its conditions and limitations, but the thing itself is mysterious as life. There is a force that makes life beautiful and death repulsive, a force that leaves a man's body when the beating of the heart stops, a force that we cannot see, weigh, or detect, and yet is real and mighty in our being. For want of a more defining term we, in our ignorance, call it vital force. Now, in the plant this vital force seems to find its store or reservoir in the root. The moment the root is disturbed the plant shows less of vitality and beauty, droops, fades, withers. The health of the root is the health of this force.

More than even feeding on Christ, more than appropriating His qualities, is the soul's living touch of the living Christ. We are deeply conscious of the force and stimulus of some people's presence; we can speak better when they are present to listen; we do our best and beyond it—we "excel ourselves"—when they praise us; we feel helped to goodness and lowered to badness by some personal associations. But the true Christian man knows that far more than any human presence his spirit is sensitive to Christ's personality.

¶ In all soils, earths, and rocks there are certain salts, which are as necessary to the life of the plant as iron is necessary to our blood. To get these salts out of the earth and to get them into the plant is the work the root has to perform. To do this it is furnished with a number of little fine wavy rootlets; these are the subtle tongues of the root, by which it first tastes, and then separates and eats the diet on which its life, and the plant's, depends. When these are eaten the root performs another function; it does not always at once send all the nourishment up into the plant; it is eminently a wise and thrifty housekeeper; it stores up the nourishment, as in the bulb of crocus or hyacinth, or as in the radish, or carrot, or potato, and so the root becomes a storehouse or refuge to feed the little plant in its infancy, and to protect it in bad and barren times if they should come. All this work of eating is done, not by the great thick roots, but by the little delicate wavy tips; they choose, they appropriate, they convey, and their choice it is which gives the varied autumn tints to the separate trees.[1]

[1] R. H. Lovell, *First Types of the Christian Life*, 260.

There is a secret down in my heart
That nobody's eye can see;
In the world's great plan it has no part,
But it makes my world to me.
The stars regardless have onward rolled,
But they owe my secret half their gold.

It lies so low, so low in my breast,
At the foot of all else 'tis found;
To all other things it is the rest,
And it makes their fruit abound;
By the breath of its native life it lives,
It shines alone by the light it gives.

It fills my heart and it fills my life
With a glory of source unseen,
It makes me calm in the midst of strife,
And in winter my heart is green.
For the birds of promise sing in my tree
When the storm is breaking on land and sea.

2. *The second requisite of growth is suitable food.*—The waste and wear of the Christian life must be constantly repaired. Nor can it be repaired in public assembly or in seasons of religious fervour. Then and there you get the stimulus for repair, advice for repair, but the growth-processes are in quiet, in unseen meditation, and in more delicate and minute operations; they are eminently personal. Faith sometimes loses its force and realness, love loses its fire, our ideals become commonplace, our energy decreases, our enthusiasm wanes, our aspiration becomes dulled, our spiritual taste loses its piquancy, and our appetite becomes cloyed. Now the food necessary to remedy this is simply Christ, and only Christ. He alone can re-inspire ideals, re-create taste, nourish energy, fire love, make faith real, stimulate appetite. The personality and love of the living Christ are the only food of the Spirit's more sensitive roots. In a word, we live in Him, and the measure in which He nourishes us is at once the measure of our health, our strength, and our life.

¶ This food never grows stale. The soul drives the spiral of its ascent upward into eternity, not by reason of strength derived from the gross food of the earth, but as that strange bird of which the mystics tell, whose food was grown for it in the air, and on

which it feasted as it flew, developing strength for motion, and finding food ever more plentiful to its mouth as it soared. So the soul finds on the crest of every moral altitude it reaches food prepared for its hunger, eats of it, and then moves upward to a loftier height—knowing that, on that farther crest, there too it shall find provision waiting for it.[1]

¶ Where do we find Christ? First and foremost in the Bible. Our staple sustenance is therefore to be derived from the Word of God. No other means of growth can take the place of this. We can no more develop Christian character by service without study of the Word and without prayer than we can make the thundering locomotive run along the track unless we feed its fires. We cannot live by work in the physical realm unless we have proper food. And to feed our soul we must not only read the Word and study the Word, but yield our whole life to the claim of the Word.

3. *But for the soul's health there is also needed the vigorous and active use of all our powers.*—Disuse and decay are as clearly connected in the one as in the other. The grace which we do not exercise, like the limb we never use, or the faculty we never exert, withers and dies at last. The duties that are appointed us are not arbitrarily chosen, they are each of them designed to exercise and strengthen some one or other spiritual faculty. And the neglect of any one of these can never be compensated by any additional activity in the performance of any other; we can never omit any one of these without injuring and weakening some corresponding grace, without making our Christian character one-sided and distorted, and therefore weak and sickly. Every talent is to be accounted for.

¶ It was Jenny Lind's intense conviction that her art was a gift of God, to be dedicated to His service. This belief was continually on her lips. "I have always put God first," she said, during her last days. It was this which you could feel in her pose, as she stood high-strung and prophetic, to deliver a great theme, such as "I know that my Redeemer liveth." It was this which was the key to her superb generosity to the sick and the suffering; she was fulfilling her consecrated office towards them. It was this which sent her voice thrilling along the wards of the Brompton Hospital, where she loved to sing to those for whom she had herself built a whole wing. It was this which kindled all her enthusiasm for Mlle. Janotha, in whom she found a kindred

[1] W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, 303.

mind—Janotha who had said to her (she told me), "What is this 'world' of which people speak? I do not know what 'the world' is. I play for Jesus Christ."[1]

4. *Finally, all growth has its periods of rest.*—Trees and plants grow downward first, then horizontally for awhile, and then laterally; then the horizontal and lateral periods succeed each other regularly until the fulness is reached. So Christian growth needs silence, obscurity, and regular periods of rest, periods for broadening, for strengthening, for ripening, for shadowing the growths that have already been made. All living things here need sleep, and even our spirits have their periods of rest. This rest is the outcome of trust in God. The active energetic follower of Christ is in danger of becoming irritated and irritating. The remedy is trust.

¶ A letter to S. S., 1861, touches artistic ways and means: "As I was going to bed I thought of the straitness of my income, and the wants of the family, and the possibilities of the future; and, for a time, felt faithless and unbelieving. But my mind turned to God, and I thought of the unchangeable love which has led me, and fed me, and delivered me from all evil, and forgiven me, and made me happy; so that in spite of a fearful heart, and an uncertain tenure, and a host of evils within and without, life is really a joyful thing. And what God has done for me, who began life with nothing, not even godliness, He can do for my children. And so I lay down quite light-hearted and free from all anxious care; and with a breeze of thankfulness and praise blowing through the avenues of my soul."[2]

IV.

The Direction of Growth.

1. The direction of Christian growth is *upward.* It is towards Jesus Christ. "Unto each one of us was the grace given that we may grow up in all things into him, which is the head, even Christ." Where life from God, through full obedience, is received by a soul, that soul is day by day, hour by hour, yea, moment by moment, growing into the likeness of the Son of God. When, by God's grace, we reach the perfection of consummation, when we

[1] H. Scott Holland, *Personal Studies*, 21.

[2] *James Smetham*, 122.

have done with the bud of promise and the blossom of hope, and have come to the fruitage of realization, what will that final glory be? The psalmist had a fore-glimpse of it when he said, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." The Apostle John saw it even more clearly, "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is." The consummation of Christian character is perfect approximation to the character of Jesus Christ. We shall have reached the fruitage of Christian life when we see Him, and when we are like Him. Growth into His likeness, then, is the line of Christian development.

> And so all growth that is not toward God
> Is growing to decay. All increase gained
> Is but an ugly, earthy, fungous growth.
> 'Tis aspiration as that wick aspires,
> Towering above the light it overcomes,
> But ever sinking with the dying flame.[1]

2. There is a growth *downward*, that is, growth in the knowledge of our own hearts. "Study thyself;" for if you would educate the soul, you cannot wisely or efficiently do so unless you not only look but dwell within, and so come to learn what you truly are, and what you may yet become. Says Coleridge: "It is the advice of the wise man, dwell at home, or with yourself, though there are very few that do this; yet it is surprising that the greatest part of mankind cannot be prevailed upon at least to visit themselves sometimes."

¶ A man once bought a barometer under a mistaken idea of its purpose, and then complained that he could not see that it had made any improvement in the weather. The spiritual barometer of self-examination may not directly improve the weather, but may show what the spiritual weather is. It helps one to obey the old Delphic oracle, "Know thyself."[2]

3. There is a growth *outward*. The man who does something for others does something for himself. If he is freezing and obeys an impulse to keep another man from freezing, the warmth which he

[1] George MacDonald, *Poetical Works*, i. 13.

[2] *The Treasury*, May 1902, p. 82.

generates reacts upon himself. Exercise is not only expenditure but accretion. As the pendulum swings out only to travel back on the same arc, so the force which goes out in exercise comes back in the form of strengthened fibre. So is it also in the realm of intellect and the domain of soul. Expenditure is followed by enrichment. One gives out the treasures of his mind, only to find that clearer perception and more facile diction are the result of his effort, and he can do better the second time because he has been aided by his first attempt. The soul grows by virtue of every effort to do good. And altruism means not only the blessing of mankind but also the evolution of character.

¶ For three months Mrs. Sellar, my husband's mother, lay in her room, her bodily powers gradually failing, but nothing clouding her mind nor weakening her immense power of loving.

Except Robert, the Australian, all her sons were in this country at this time. They all came and went constantly to see her: the best-beloved, Johnnie, came down twice a week from London to be with her. Though she could not eat much, it was a pleasure to him to bring all kinds of little comforts to her. And she who counted that day lost in which she had given nothing, was always touched and surprised by gifts bestowed on herself. Once he brought her down a beautiful soft grey dressing-gown, and the first time she had it on I happened to slip unseen into the room. He was sitting beside her, and she was stroking his hand, saying, "My dear Johnnie, my bonnie boy"; and then, with a funny little touch of humour she added, "Would it be profane to say, 'Thou hast warmed me, clothed and fed me'?"[1]

V.

The Tests of Growth.

1. *One test of growth is a warmer and more unselfish love.*—As our knowledge of Christ becomes more intimate we love Him for what He is in Himself, and not so much for what He has done. The latter is not free from a taint of selfishness. It is one thing for me to be intensely grateful to the man who pulls me out of the fire, but it is another thing to love him as a man, apart from

[1] Mrs. Sellar, *Recollections and Impressions*, 234.

his act. I must be often with him first, and learn what manner of spirit he is of, before I can be said to love him. Applying this test to Christ, do I love Him most because He is the incarnation of virtue and goodness? Then is my love not altogether unworthy of Him. It has, at any rate, lost the alloy of impulse and selfishness, so apt to spoil the most precious ore of the heart.

¶ I believe that if we were like Christ even the wild beasts of our woods and fields would flee to us for refuge and deliverance; and man must be in the world as He was in the world, and then the world will blossom around him with all God's meanings, and not merely with men's sayings. We shall grow in the graciousness and in the knowledge of the Lord Christ until we ourselves are blessed with the same joy with which Christ was blessed, until we are glad with the eternal gladness of the eternal God. And less than that Christ would not have died for, less than that could be wrought at less expense.[1]

2. *Another test of growth is what we outgrow.*—Bring me the coat I wore as a boy at school, and let me try it on; I shall soon discover whether I have grown. Bring me the essays I wrote at eighteen, and let me read them; I shall soon be able to tell you whether my mind has grown. So I like to go back over my older views of God, my ideas and wants as to communion with Him, my previous felt need of Him and joy in Him, and when I know how I think of Him, need Him, talk to Him, walk with Him now, I can soon see if the old spiritual garments of twenty years ago would fit now, or are too small.

¶ In some of our houses there are little faded marks on the walls or door-posts, where the children when they were growing stood to have their height registered; but now that they have done growing the marks are neglected. Is there in your life any experience like this? You used to be anxious about your spiritual condition; are you now, or are these matters only a faded memory? Have you of late grown spiritually? When will you reach the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ?[2]

¶ Away in the hills at Candy in Ceylon there is a great artificial lake, round the edge of which palm-trees of a certain kind are planted. Look at the trunk of one of the trees. You see the bark is covered with rings, one above another, from the

[1] George MacDonald.

[2] R. H. Lovell, *First Types of the Christian Life*, 281.

roots to the very top of the tree. Every ring represents a year; and so from the number of the rings I can tell the age of the tree. Now, it is not quite so easy as that to mark your growth in grace. It is true, however, that very often the face bears traces of the growing goodness within. But when a man grows out of old, doubtful friendships, when he grows out of old habits that were not lovely—habits of idleness, impatience, exaggeration, spitefulness, deceit, pettishness—then I know that man is growing in grace.[1]

When passing southward, I may cross the line
Between the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans,
I may now know, by any test of mine,
By any startling signs or strange commotions
Across my track.

But if the days grow sweeter, one by one,
And e'en the icebergs melt their hardened faces,
And sailors linger, basking in the sun,
I know I must have made the change of places,
Some distance back.

When, answering timidly the Master's call,
I passed the bourne of life in coming to Him,
When in my love for Him I gave up all;
The very moment when I thought I knew Him,
I cannot tell.

But, as unceasingly I feel His love;
As this cold heart is melted to o'erflowing,
As now so clear the light comes from above,
I wonder at the change, and pass on, knowing
That all is well.

3. *Another test of growth is power to resist temptation.*—They say that the sea has welded together by its continuous action the stones that form Plymouth Breakwater. When first they were tipped into the ocean, and each was a separate stone, the ocean might have carried them away; but now the waters have compacted them into a solid mass that nothing can move. Change the figure: a newly planted young tree a boy may root up; no man can root up the oak that has grown for fifty years. Growth so roots us and grounds us that storms which would once have caused us terror come only as music.

[1] A. A. Cooper, *God's Forget-me-not*, 44.

¶ Principal Rainy's son, the late Mr. Rolland Rainy, M.P., once said that he never saw his father out of temper, never even momentarily perturbed during the appalling troubles through which the Free Church was called to pass when the decision of the House of Lords threatened to ruin her. "How do you manage to control yourself?" he asked the Principal one day; "do you know, I never remember seeing you bursting into a passion?" "My son," was the reply, "I once lost my temper atrociously in public, and I made such a fool of myself and did such damage to the cause which I represented that I resolved, for my own soul's sake and for Christ's sake, never again to commit such folly and sin; and I prayed the Lord to help me to keep my vow. By His grace I have been able to set a watch before the door of my lips."[1]

4. *But there is no test of growth so easily applied as beauty of character.*—It is a test which we ourselves may not be able to apply; its very existence is dependent on our unconsciousness of its existence. But it is the test beyond every other which others apply to us. And it is the most conclusive.

¶ Some years ago, a member of one of my former congregations, a Christian woman of refinement and of great consecration, went to stay in the home of her sister in the country, where she had not stayed for many years. Her sister was a woman of the world, engrossed in worldly pleasures and interests. When my friend was leaving the home, after a stay of two weeks, her sister, taking her by the hand, and looking into her face, said, "I do not understand your religion, but I will tell you one thing; it has made you far easier to live with."[2]

¶ Liddon had that which we call "distinction." You might agree with him, or not agree; you might criticize and discuss his gifts; but, anyhow, he had the quality of speciality. In any roomful of men, his presence was felt with a distinct and rare impression. If he let himself speak, his voice, manner, style, articulation, arrested you; you wanted to listen to him, whoever else was speaking; his phrases, his expressions, caught your ear. Here was somebody notable; so you knew. He stood out from his fellows; there was a flavour in his company which was unique. And this impression is one which belonged to character; it was not the result of any particular and separate gift, but it made itself known through them all.[3]

[1] *British Weekly.*

[2] G. Campbell Morgan, *The Simple Things of the Christian Life*, 63.

[3] H. Scott Holland, *Personal Studies*, 140.

Fellowship in the Light.

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Fellowship in the Light.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. —1 John i. 7.

1. It is remarkable that the Apostle does not here repeat what he had just before said of "fellowship with God," as we might have expected he would do. Indeed, so natural is that expectation, that Dr. Plummer says, "The craving to make this verse the exact antithesis of the preceding one has generated another reading" as old as the second century—"We have fellowship with Him." The real reason for the altered expression to be found in this verse is to be sought in the fact that fellowship with "one another" in the body of Christ is the human expression and result of all real fellowship with God. The communion of saints is an unmistakable proof that the saints themselves are in communion with God.

2. A second result of this walk in the light now comes to be mentioned. It leads to the discovery of sin, of our own sin, and so St. John adds, "and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The connexion of these words with what has gone before is not accidental, for our walking in the light first of all discloses to us the reality of our own sin, and then reveals to us the perfect cleansing from sin that God has provided in "the blood of Jesus his Son."

¶ That blessed text, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," which sometimes comes down on the heart like a whole heaven of peace and joy and glory, will at other times be as meaningless as the darkest sayings of the prophets, or as powerless as the vainest utterances of human folly. And then just as one is bemoaning its darkness, it will suddenly blaze out in

astonishing brightness, and almost startle the heart by its revelations of safety and strength.[1]

¶ This was the text that God blessed to give peace to Hedley Vicars, that dashing young officer who died at Sebastopol leading on his soldiers, and crying out, "This way, men of the 97th!" He had before this been a careless young man; but one day he went to a brother officer's room, and found him not within. There was a Bible lying on the table, and he took it up just to while away the time. The first verse that his eye lighted on was this: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "Cleanseth us from all sin?" said he. "And is there really something that can cleanse away all my sins? If so, by the blessing of God, I'll have them cleansed away." And soon he was rejoicing in Jesus, who died for his sins, and who was then alive, and present with him continually. Ever afterwards till he died, this was his favourite verse: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."[2]

¶ In 1907 King Oscar of Sweden lay on his death-bed. When the end seemed very near, the Queen bent down over her husband and repeated this verse in his ear. The dying King replied, "Thanks be to Jesus." These were his last words (from a newspaper report).

We can understand what the sorrowing wife meant by quoting the verse. The outward parting was approaching, yet the fellowship would abide.

> O blest communion, fellowship Divine!
> We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
> Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.

"The blood of Jesus cleanseth" comes last in the verse. We might have thought that it should come first. First the cleansing, and then the walking. But no, just as we walk in the light shall we realize the need of cleansing all the more, up to the very close of life. And so the King's last words were "Thanks be to Jesus."[3]

Walking in the Light.

1. *In the light.*—There is no greater blessing than light. It is the indispensable condition of our existence. Bereft of light, all

[1] *The Life of R. W. Dale*, 79. [2] W. J. Patton, *Pardon and Assurance*, 88.
[3] John S. Maver.

life would languish. Every living creature would lose its brightness and activity; every plant would wither; all the material world would lose its charm. How natural was it for men to identify with light the good they felt at work in their hearts, and to mark by darkness the evil with which it had to strive! Even in the Old Testament, light is the chosen figure for purity, truth, and life; darkness for impurity, falsehood, and death. Here, then, we find the most probable explanation of the special form in which the Apostle sets his representation of the nature of God. He is anxious to protect his fellow-disciples against the subtle errors by which he sees them surrounded. He wishes especially to guard them against the superstitious notion that there could be the merest shadow of evil in the nature or life of Him whom they had come to know as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus.

What is suggested by "light" throughout the passage is something absolutely luminous and transparent, in which there is no concealment and no need for any. To say that God is light is to say for one thing that in God there is nothing to hide: if He is dark, it is with excess of light; it is because He dwells in light that is inaccessible, not because there is anything in Him that of its own nature craves obscurity. This is the line on which our thoughts are led by the following verses, where the opposite of walking in the light is evidently hiding sin, or denying that we have sinned. It is some kind of secrecy—which no doubt has its motive in sin—that is meant by darkness, and this gives us the key to walking in the light. To walk in the light means to live a life in which there is nothing hidden, nothing in which we are insincere with ourselves, nothing in which we seek to impose upon others. We may have, and no doubt we will have, both sin and the sense of sin upon us—"if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"—but we may walk in the light nevertheless, if we deal truly with our sin; and it is only as we do so that we enjoy Christian fellowship and are cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

¶ Did you never, in walking the fields, come across a large flat stone, which had lain, nobody knows how long, just where you found it, with the grass forming a little hedge, as it were, all around it, close to its edges?—and have you not, in obedience to a kind of feeling that told you it had been lying there long enough,

insinuated your stick or your foot or your fingers under its edge and turned it over as a housewife turns a cake, when she says to herself, "It's done brown enough by this time"? What an odd revelation, and what an unforeseen and unpleasant surprise to a small community, the very existence of which you had not suspected, until the sudden dismay and scattering among its members produced by your turning the old stone over! Blades of grass flattened down, colourless, matted together, as if they had been bleached and ironed; hideous crawling creatures, some of them coleopterous or horny-shelled—turtle-bugs, one wants to call them; some of them softer, but cunningly spread out and compressed like Lepine watches; black, glossy crickets, with their long filaments sticking out like the whips of four-horse stage-coaches; motionless, slug-like creatures, young larvæ, perhaps more horrible in their pulpy stillness than even in the infernal wriggle of maturity! But no sooner is the stone turned and the wholesome light of day let upon the compressed and blinded community of creeping things, than all of them which enjoy the luxury of legs—and some of them have a good many—rush about wildly, butting each other and everything in their way, and end in a general stampede for underground retreats from the region poisoned by sunshine. *Next year* you will find the grass growing tall and green where the stone lay; the ground-bird builds her nest where the beetle had its hole; the dandelion and the buttercup are growing there; and the broad fans of insect-angels open and shut over their golden disks, as the rhythmic waves of blissful consciousness pulsate through their glorified being.[1]

2. *Walking in the light.*—Life is a walk. It is something to feel that life is a walk; not a game, a pastime, or outburst of passion; not a random flight, or a groping, creeping, grovelling crawl, or a mazy, labyrinthian puzzle; but a walk; a steady walk; an onward march and movement; a business-like, purpose-like, step-by-step advance in front—such a walk as a man girds himself for and shoes himself for, and sets out upon with staff in hand, and firm-set face; and holds on in, amid stormy wind and drifting snow; resolute to have it finished and to reach the goal. Such a walk is real life—life in earnest.

¶ Jowett, I remember, had said shortly before, in one of his quaint and characteristic Balliol sermons, "The search for truth is one thing; fluttering after it is another." Here was a man whose

[1] O. W. Holmes, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, ch. v.

earnestness rebuked all "fluttering," who was plainly in honest and urgent search for truth, and who found it in the Word made Flesh.[1]

¶ In the ages when a pilgrimage to Palestine was held in such esteem, there sprang up a set of idle impostors who wandered about everywhere in the country and sought alms at the hands of the inhabitants under the pretext that they were preparing to go *à la sainte terre*—to the Holy Land. It was soon discovered that they had never left their native shores; and such disgust did their vain professions inspire that a new word was coined to reprobate the shameful practice, and they were called "saunterers." With equal truth may the term be applied to all who profess to be Christians without moving forward energetically to the heavenly goal.[2]

¶ As to the character which our work should bear, Browning's teaching is clear beyond the shadow of a doubt. However menial the work itself may be, it must be done with the utmost possible efficiency. He will not countenance any shuffling, any inferior expedients for completing the task allotted, simply with a view to *getting through* it.

> Our best is bad, nor bears Thy test;
> Still, it should be our very best.

If it be not, then not only will that which is wrought be so far defective, but the possibilities of the future will be marred and spoiled. Our life is a unity. One flaw makes its influence felt everywhere, prevents the perfection of the whole—more than that, hinders any true advancement towards perfection:

> If one step's awry, one bulge
> Calls for correction by a step we thought
> Got over long since, why, till that is wrought,
> No progress![3]

3. Walking in the light, *as He is in the light.*—What does this mean? How can it be done? First let us remember that the Apostle makes no impossible demand when he speaks of our walking in the light. He does not require of us that we should be perfect in the sense in which God is perfect; but he does demand that we should in all sincerity place ourselves under the influence of the light which is in God, and which streams forth

[1] *Frederick Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury*, i. 584.
[2] J. P. Lilley, *The Pathway of Light*, 26.
[3] J. Flew, *Studies in Browning*, 193.

from Him. He does not ask perfect holiness, as God is holy; but he demands concentrated zeal. No hindrance must be offered to the light of truth and holiness with which our life is to be penetrated. When he bids us "walk in the light," he means, as already said, that our whole life should be influenced thereby, our thoughts and acts, the outer as well as the inner man; our life is to be illuminated through that hallowing and transfiguring light which comes from God, and which illuminates us in Christ Jesus.

¶ Everything depends on whether what we do is done in the darkness or in the light. A manufacturer of carmine, who was aware of the superiority of the French colour, went to Lyons and bargained with the most celebrated manufacturer in that city for the acquisition of his secret. He was shown all the process, and saw a beautiful colour produced; but he found not the least difference between the French mode of fabrication and that which had been constantly adopted by himself. He appealed to his instructor, and insisted that he must have concealed something. The man assured him that he had not, and invited him to see the process a second time. He minutely examined the water and the materials, which were in every respect similar to his own; and then, very much surprised, he said, "I have lost my labour and my money, for the air of England does not permit us to make good carmine." "Stay," said the Frenchman; "what kind of weather do you manufacture in? Were I to attempt to manufacture it on a dark cloudy day, my results would be the same as yours. Let me advise you always to make carmine on bright, sunny days."[1]

II.

Fellowship.

1. Walking in the light produces a genuine fellowship. The light in which God dwells becomes the very element in which His true children breathe and move. A communion ensues, which extends to the whole society of believers, and the members are linked each to each, as all are linked in heaven, by the same golden bands that bind them to the community on high and to their common Head, until the last link of the whole disappears from view, lost in the central light that surrounds the "unapproachable" throne of God.

[1] L. A. Banks, *John and his Friends*, 21.

Redeemed by one sacrifice for sins for ever, they share *one life*, for Christ is their life; *one ambition*, for His glory is their highest desire; *one food*, for His Word and His Table are their sustenance; *one faith*, for all their hope is built on His Blood and righteousness, not on their own; *one task*, for the evangelization of the world is the work which He has left His Church to do; *one heart*, for if one member suffers all the members, so far as membership is real and vital, and not merely mechanical or even ecclesiastical, suffer with it; *one in hope*, for all are, if things are right with them, "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"; and with *one rule of life*, freely giving what has been freely received.

¶ The Gospel became at once a social message. The preaching which laid hold of the outer man, detaching him from the world, and uniting him to his God, was also a preaching of solidarity and brotherliness. The Gospel, it has been truly said, is at bottom both individualistic and socialistic. Its tendency towards mutual association, so far from being an accidental phenomenon in its history, is inherent in its character. It spiritualizes the irresistible impulse which draws one man to another, and it raises the social connexion of human beings from the sphere of a convention to that of a moral obligation. In this way it serves to heighten the worth of man, and essays to recast contemporary society, to transform the socialism which involves a conflict of interests into the socialism which rests upon the consciousness of a spiritual unity and common goal. This was ever present to the mind of the great Apostle to the Gentiles. In his little churches, where each person bore his neighbour's burden, St. Paul's spirit already saw the dawning of a new humanity, and in the Epistle to the Ephesians he has voiced this feeling with a thrill of exultation. Far in the background of these churches, like some unsubstantial semblance, lay the division between Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, great and small, rich and poor. For a new humanity had now appeared, and the Apostle viewed it as Christ's body, in which every member served the rest and each was indispensable in his own place.[1]

2. Dependence is, indeed, an inexorable law of natural life. Our faith has anticipated the conclusion and hallowed it. Men must be dependent on one another. For saints this dependence

[1] Harnack.

is transfigured into fellowship. The believer recognizes that the power which acts upon him from without is the expression of a spiritual life. He sees that the image of Christ's Body gives the truest possible view of the relation in which all who are "in Him" stand to one another. The one life, the one Spirit, by which they are united to their Head, united eternally, united them in time to one another. In that Divine vision life appears in the fullest proportions we can yet apprehend. We turn from the living to the dead, and, as we contemplate the splendour of the heritage which they have bequeathed to us, we confess with no unworthy self-disparagement that without them we are incomplete. We turn from the dead to the living, and as we trace the lineaments of a Divine likeness in those about us, we give thanks without presumption that there are saints now.

¶ Sir Henry Havelock used to meet with his soldiers for prayer. His men were called "Havelock's saints." "Yes," said Sir Robert Sale, "and I wish the whole regiment were Havelock's saints, for I never see a saint in the guardroom, or his name in the defaulter's book." On one occasion in Burmah, when an outpost was attacked by night, some of the troops being unfit for duty through drink, the General in command said, "Get the saints, you can depend on them, they are always sober."[1]

III.

Cleansing

1. One of the first evidences and signs of the coming of the Spirit of God—and His coming is the coming of the light in the heart—is a new discovery of the depth and reality of sin. It is the imperfect light, the twilight, in which so many professing Christians live that accounts for that weakened sense of sin which is so marked a feature of the present day.

¶ Some little time ago a tourist who was walking through the Lake District was overtaken at night by a heavy storm of wind and of rain, and soon got soaked to the skin. In the darkness he was glad to see the twinkling of a light by the roadside that proved to be the light of a little inn, in which he at once took shelter from the pitiless rain. The landlord, with a rushlight,

[1] *Morning Watch*, 1894, p. 16.

showed him to what looked like a fairly clean and comfortable room, and the weary and soaked traveller was glad to get rid of his wet things and to have them dried by the morning.

The morning sun streaming through the window awoke him, and the moment his eyes were opened he was horrified to see the room in which he had been sleeping. The walls and the floor and even the curtains were filthy, and he was glad to escape from the room as quickly as possible. The night before he thought the room was fairly clean, now he saw its foulness; but the room had not changed during the night, it was only the light that had changed. The little rushlight was not light enough to reveal all the dirt of the room, but when the sunlight of heaven came streaming in the revelation was made in a moment.[1]

2. Now it is a universal law that blood alone can redeem. The Creator of all things accepts the law of suffering in order to save and to bless the race that has sinned. The connexion between this suffering and the remission of sins may be hard to trace; but in the absence of any theory defining that connexion we may recognize the harmony between this revelation of the infinite love of God and the deepest laws of human life. We must suffer greatly to redeem greatly. God also suffered greatly that He might greatly redeem. And apart from theory, when the human heart, agitated by the consciousness of sin, troubled by the guilt of past years, seeing the shadow of that guilt extending over the years that are coming, wondering whether it can ever be possible to escape from it—when the human heart, haunted by the worst fears, discovers that the Eternal Son of God is descending from the heights of eternal glory and is sharing its sufferings, its temptations, its death, the Gospel is out, the secret is disclosed. He has come to suffer instead of to punish. He, the representative of the Eternal Lord of Righteousness, must express in some way His abhorrence and His condemnation of human sin. How shall He express it? By sweeping into eternal darkness the race that had transgressed the Divine commandments? No! but in a sublimer form, by making Himself one of that race, and descending from His eternal glories to shame, to sorrow, and to death. Apart from theory altogether, the discovery that the Eternal Son of God has done *that*, quietens the conscience, gives the heart

[1] G. S. Barrett, *The First Ewistle General of St. John*, 50.

courage and peace, and enables the man who had faltered and hesitated as to whether he could accept the assurance of Divine forgiveness to accept it with courage, thankfulness, and hope.

¶ The essential part of every sin offering was the blood, because the blood is the life. It was, further, a principle of the Mosaic sacrifices that anything placed upon the altar became the property of God, and was, therefore, invested with a peculiar sanctity. The blood of a sacrificed animal was thus first a thing of excellent worth in itself, being the life; and next a thing endowed with highest sanctity, because it now belonged to God. It was the most holy thing with which even the high priest himself had to do. Once more, the law said that nothing less sacred than this consecrated blood might be used in the expiation of sin. For certain ceremonial defilements water was the purifying element; but in a majority of instances even these defilements exacted a mingling of blood with the water. The statement of the writer to the Hebrews is strictly accurate,—"almost all things are by the law purged with blood" (Heb. ix. 22). For the removal of moral defilement, however—for the purposes of an atonement—nothing but the consecrated blood was efficacious. Without shedding of blood is no remission.[1]

3. Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture; died the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. And, whatever the ineffable mystery of the atonement may conceal, this at least is clear, that our sins did, in some way, make part of the terrible necessity that He must die if He would save us. These phases of the sacrificed life of our Lord—its wondrous revelation of His own deathless purpose to save us; its exhibition of the great heart of God not willing that we should perish; and its connexion, its real and dread connexion, with our sins—these are the elements that constitute the cleansing power of that sacrificed life. For these mighty forces excite within the bosom of every man who vividly contemplates the cross of Christ the two emotions which, far more than any others, are the redeeming, saving, purifying energies of our hearts. They excite gratitude and love.

¶ Of such supreme importance in the Christian revelation is this idea, or rather this fact, of redemption by His blood, that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself instituted a solemn service to express it, and to be the perpetual memorial and monument of it. Other great truths Christ trusted to the oral and written

[1] W. J. Woods.

teaching of Apostles; but that He is the bread of life and that His blood was shed for the remission of sins are truths of a unique kind; they belong to the very substance of the Christian revelation; they are the germs and the roots of everything besides. To lose them would be to lose what is most characteristic and what is most essential in all that He has revealed to mankind. While they are preserved everything is saved. He therefore did not choose to trust them to the written Gospels, which would preserve the memory of His life and His ministry; He did not choose to trust them to the oral teachings of the Apostles or to the Epistles which they were to write; He instituted a pathetic service, a visible ceremonial, to enshrine, to protect them, to perpetuate them through all generations.[1]

(1) *The Blood cleanses:* it does not merely cloak.—The high priest was to take an aspersory of hyssop and dip it in the blood of the victim and sprinkle the doors and the holy place, typifying thereby that the sprinkling of the Blood of Christ is that which sanctifies the universe, of which the tabernacle was the symbol. It is a direct allusion to the Passion of Christ that we find in the Fifty-first Psalm, where David says, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean"; that is, sprinkle me as the high priest sprinkled the victim, with the Blood of Christ, and I shall be clean—clean from the defilement and pollution of sin and its consequences.

¶ When Butler in his dying moments had expressed his awe at appearing face to face before the Moral Governor of the world, his Chaplain, we are told, spoke to him of "the blood which cleanseth from all sin." "Ah, that is comfortable," he replied; and with these words on his lips he gave up his soul to God.[2]

(2) *It is not mere remission.*—It is not mere averting of the punishment. It is not mere pronouncing man just when he is in fact unjust. It is not mere annulling of pains and penalties. It is all this and more. By cleansing we mean making that pure which before was foul, and this is what we attribute to the Blood of Christ. We believe that in that Blood there is such a virtue as to be able to transform the sinful nature of man into an imperfect but real image of the holiness of God; that before its might, all that is base and unclean fades away, and that, like the chemist's potent elixir, it transmutes the baser elements with which it comes in contact into a new and more perfect substance.

[1] R. W. Dale. [2] Bishop Lightfoot, *Northern Leaders*, 169.

¶ Pardon is not enough. Pardon seems merely to restore us to a kind of negative condition. Pardon may mean, in some cases, where not fully understood and realized, mere innocence. There was a stain upon the heart: that stain has been removed by a powerful detergent, and now the heart is pretty much as it was in years gone by. That may be some people's notion of pardon. But when God pardons there is another step involved, and another element enters into consideration. Man becomes not only pardoned, he becomes also holy. Holiness is more than innocence. Holiness denotes vitality of sympathy as between the soul and God. Holiness is the comprehensive word which includes the whole discipline of life, the whole trust of the heart in God, and the continuous aspiration of the spirit after the perfectness of God's own beauty.[1]

(3) *The Blood cleanses continuously.*—It cleanses when we first come to Jesus, but it continues to cleanse every day we live.

¶ No feature in the growing saintliness of an earnest Christian is more marked than his desire to make continued use of the blood of the Lamb. Said a Scottish minister of the older days: "New spots call for new washing, so that this must be our very life and exercise to be daily and continually running to the fountain with our souls and giving Christ the great Purger much to do." "The saint's preparation for the duties of each day," wrote Dr. Bonar, "is a fresh application to the blood, in which he bathes his conscience anew each morning as he rises." So Robert McCheyne also wrote: "I ought to go to Christ for the forgiveness of each sin. In washing my body, I go over every spot and wash it out. Should I be less careful in washing my soul? This is God's way of peace and holiness. It is folly to the world and the beclouded heart; but it is *the way.* I must never think a sin too small to need immediate application to the blood of Christ."

(4) *The Blood cleanses completely*—"from all sin."—Fellowship with God and walking in the light can never take sin away. No emotion, no feeling, no attainment, no height of spirituality, can remove our guilt. Our guilt was taken away by the great Propitiation, when He suffered without the gate, and knew the withdrawings of God. We have our peace not from the reigning Saviour, but from the bleeding Saviour, not from the King in His glory, but from the Redeemer in His shame. For this text speaks

[1] J. Parker.

of a complete cleansing. We are cleansed from *all* sin. Even though the body of sin crucified within us is dying its slow, difficult death, there is a great sense in which we are even now delivered from all evil. Through the blood-shedding of Christ we have remission of sins now, and are as truly forgiven as we shall be when the light of the glory of God falls on the resurrection face. So far as sin is a matter of guilt before God, it is taken away even to the last relic of evil, and we walk with God in the light, having our conversation above the skies.

¶ Soon after I was converted I bought a cyclostyle so that I could make many copies of my own Gospel messages and bills. In my enthusiasm I forgot the effect of the special ink on linen. My wristbands, collars, and handkerchiefs got woefully stained with what my mother called "that nasty black stuff." One hot summer day I had been very busy. My fingers became unusually black with ink, and, forgetting this, I pushed up my wristbands, pulled my collar to ease my neck, and finally pulled out my handkerchief to wipe my perspiring face. Turning them out for the washing, my mother brought them to me to show me how I had stained them, saying mortal hands could never wash them white again. She threatened to burn my cyclostyle, and this made me think soberly how could these black stains be removed. On the morning of the washing day a bill was passed into our door. I looked at it and to my surprise and joy I read in capital letters: "Warranted to take out all stains and make the linen pure and white." I soon purchased this cleanser and said to my mother, "I am sorry for what I have done, but here is something that will take the stains out. Just try it." She looked at it, a little suspicious, but said nothing. When I returned in the evening I was glad to see my mother looking quite pleased. I said, "Did you try that cleanser?" "Yes, I did." "How did it act?" "Act! Why, Tom, there's not a stain left and I never saw your linen look so white, it is as white as the driven snow."[1]

Were the sad tablets of our hearts alone
A dreary blank, for Thee the task were slight,
To draw fair letters there and lines of light:
But while far other spectacle is shown
By them, with dismal traceries overdrawn,
Oh! task it seems, transcending highest might,
Ever again to make them clean and white,
Effacing the sad secrets they have known.

Thomas Calder.

And then what heaven were better than a name,
If there must haunt and cling unto us there
Abiding memories of sin and shame?
Dread doubt! which finds no answer anywhere
Except in Him, who with Him power did bring
To make us feel our sin an alien thing.[1]

[1] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 143.

Righteous Forgiveness.

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Righteous Forgiveness.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.—1 John i. 8, 9.

1. These words sum up the great characteristic aim which distinguishes Christianity from every other system and institution on earth. The object of education is to get rid of ignorance. The object of medicine is to get rid of disease. The object of Socialism (at least, according to many of its advocates) is to get rid of poverty. But the object of Christianity is to get rid of sin. The Gospel lays its finger on moral evil as the real mischief and misery of the world. Compared with the supreme curse of human selfishness, nothing else seriously matters. And accordingly the Gospel proposes to cure this inward malady of the soul. Herein, it stands apart from other religions. As Amiel said, "The prayer of the Buddhist is, 'Deliver us from existence'; the prayer of the Christian is, 'Deliver us from evil.'"

I.

Contradicting God.

1. If we say that we have no sin, we not only deceive ourselves, but we make God a liar. St. John warns us against three false views which a man is tempted to take of his condition: He may deny the reality of sin, or his responsibility for sin, or the fact of sin in his own case.

For the history of Christian faith shows how Christian enthusiasts have been found to maintain, in a strange and perverse way, that Divine communion had lifted them above the common distinctions of right and wrong. And in our own day,

when people are persuading themselves, in the name of religion, that pain and disease are illusions, we need not wonder if they persuade themselves that duty is an illusion too. The Apostle confronts such men with a strong, blunt declaration. They lie: they are false to their own knowledge of right and wrong.

And experience of our own hearts, and of our own friends, explains how religious men can yet excuse themselves for wrong-doing by saying, "We have no sin"—that is to say, we are not responsible, we cannot be blamed. But to argue thus is to deceive ourselves, to confuse and corrupt our own consciences, to pervert our moral sense.

Again, it is still possible for men who recognize the reality and the ruin of moral evil to deny that they themselves are personally guilty. The Apostle confutes these men by appealing to God's estimate of their condition, as shown in His redemption: to deny that we need to be redeemed is to make God a liar.

¶ When asked whether he "had made his peace with God," Thoreau quietly replied that "he had never quarrelled with him." He was invited by another acquaintance to enter into a religious conversation concerning the next world. "One world at a time," was the prompt retort.[1]

¶ Mr. D. L. Moody says that once he visited a prison in New York to hold a service with the prisoners. Afterwards he spoke to each of the prisoners privately. He said, "I never found such an innocent lot of men in my life as in that place. Each man explained that somebody else was to blame."[2]

2. Already in the days of John there were Christians for whom the word "sin" was beginning to lose its meaning.

(1) It would seem that some thought it must be unworthy of God to vex Himself about the right or wrong doings of men. They pictured Him as so great and comprehensive that He contained within Himself darkness as well as light, and looked with equal complacency on the evil and on the good, so that what men call wrong-doing was not sin against Him, and therefore on a large view of creation deserved no condemnation. St. John knew that such a being had nothing in common with the Father of his Lord Jesus Christ, who had suffered and died to put away the

[1] H. S. Salt, *Henry David Thoreau*, 210.

[2] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks about the Tempter*, 127.

sins of the world. On the strength of his fellowship with the very life of God, which had made itself known in his own spirit through the Person of Jesus, he declares that God is light without any mixture of darkness, and that men can be partakers of His life only by refusing to do the works of darkness.

(2) It was said by others that fellowship between men and God is impossible till men are sinless, for there is always darkness mixed with their light. Not so, the Apostle says; these spots of darkness on the human spirit are not indelible; the blood of God's own Son has power to wash them out. In the virtue of that sacrifice lies the only possible abolition of sin. But do not imagine, he adds, that you have yet got clear of sin. That were self-deception. We must not only refuse to say that we have no sin, we must press forward to confess our sins, to carry them with shame before God for Him to abolish. And that He will surely do, both towards Himself and towards us. As sins in the proper sense of the word, offences against a loving Father and Maker, He will send them away, forgive them, allow them to make no breach between Him and us. As unrighteousness, as stains and injuries to our own natures, which He created for righteousness, He will cleanse them away and enable us to go forth in newness of life. Let us have no fears about His will to do this; it rests upon His very faithfulness and righteousness; in doing it He is not indulgently breaking in upon the strict law of His nature, but is acting as His external nature requires Him to act; He is but perfecting what He began, refusing to despise the work of His own hands, carrying out the purpose for which He sent His Son to die. And if, after all, in spite of the revelation of God as the destroyer of sin, we say that for our part we have committed no sin, we do more than deceive ourselves, more than refuse to receive the truth within us; we set ourselves directly against God in person, making Him a liar, smothering His voice within us.

II.

Confessing Sin.

1. What is confession? To confess sins is to own up to them before God, to say to ourselves and to Him that, however dark

the way has been and however stiff the fight, however heavy the handicap has been, nevertheless, in the inner secret of our being, we know that at the last resort and the final analysis those sins would never have darkened the face of God's heaven had we not chosen so to live.

That is confession in its first aspect—"These deeds are mine." But there is a deeper aspect. We have to remember that these sins of ours, these separate and individual acts, come from a fountain which John calls "sin." These sins, transgressions, are all of them the result of that in us which is a root and a source of evil. They are the result of that sin which is part of our character, part of our "make-up." They have not come uncaused; they have not come out of nothing, but out of our own being; and because of the strain of bad blood, because of the strain of evil, because of the open source of wrong that there is in us, in our own choice and will, they have come forth to poison earth's atmosphere. They are ours. That is confession.

(1) It is not confessing sin to admit the fact that you are a sinner; it is not confessing sin to admit the fact that it is an evil state; it is not confessing sin to admit that it is a base thing; it is not confessing sin to admit, when you contrast a holy state with an evil state, that the holy state is the better state. To confess sin is to come to the conclusion in your heart, and freely, with your lips, to make this admission, that your breach of God's law, and your not loving God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your not loving every human being as yourself, is an awful thing, *justly charged against you as your guilt*, and in respect of which, neither the force of example, nor the influence of education, nor circumstances, nor a corrupted nature, furnish any apology whatever. The Bible says expressly, "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is *not* of the Father, but is of the world"; and everywhere God is at great pains to separate between Himself and man's sin, and to exonerate Himself from all responsibility for man's sins. To confess sin is to take God's word in the matter; it is to stand upon God's side in the question; it is joining God against myself; and it is to feel that the fact that this sin is *my* sin, that this corruption is *my* corruption, does in no respect interfere with the sternness with which I

recognize that this sin is a thing in which the guilty person is *righteously* held guilty.

¶ I wish to call to remembrance my past vileness, and the corruptions of my soul; not because I love *them*, but that I may love Thee, O my God! I do this for the love of Thy love, calling to mind my most evil ways, that when I feel the bitterness of my own sin, then I may also feel how sweet Thou art.[1]

(2) What St. John insists on is that we be candid: that we be willing to be reproved and convicted, to have the cancer of evil excised by that Word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword. If we will not submit to this, is it not evident that the cancer will spread? If, however, there is candour, there will be confession to God. There will be confession also to man. St. John would not be unmindful of his Master's teaching on confession, and his words here, "If we confess," are wide enough to include confession to man as well as to God. Let there, then, be confession to the fellow-man we have wronged, if our sin has specially wronged any. No other confession to man is enjoined in Scripture. But this is enjoined, and is too seldom practised When we have sinned against our fellow-man, let us measure the reality of our confession to God by our confession to man. If pride keeps us from this latter, of what worth is the former? "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Such confession to man has its place as a means of deliverance from sin.

¶ Suppose any one ill in body, in pain and distress, lying awake at night, refusing his nourishment or finding that it does him no good, his spirits low, his heart full of anguish, feeling as if all his good days were gone, and not knowing what to do, what medicine to take, how to live in order to obtain health and strength again. What are men used to do when such trouble as this comes upon them? Finding they cannot cure themselves, they go to some one whom they think more likely to cure them. They go to the physician: and having come to him, do they leave him to find out what is the matter by merely looking at them, or do they tell him their case themselves, and answer all his questions? Of course they tell him: it is their only chance to be cured; for how else is he to know what is the matter with them? And if he does not know, how can he prescribe for them? As, then, the way of bodily cure is to tell one's case fully to the physician, so the way

[1] Augustine, *Confessions*.

of spiritual cure is to confess our sins to the physician of our souls: that is, to Almighty God, for He alone can heal the soul.[1]

2. Confession implies the reconstruction of the principles of our life. A good deal of so-called repentance is only sorrow at being punished. That is not repentance at all. And in such a state of mind no man can partake of Christ's atonement. We cannot share in our Lord's atonement until we copy His penitential character. Christ felt sin for all humanity. Christ confessed sin for all humanity. We, like Him, have to realize that the worst thing in sin is not its punishment, physical, mental, moral, but the alienation from God which it brings. It was that which broke the heart of the Sinless upon the cross. Christ has made atonement by His sinless life of obedience, leading, just because it was sinless, to the cross. But that atonement is of no use to us, we cannot subjectively participate in it, till we repent of sin and hate it, as the accursed thing which nailed the Sinless to the Holy Rood.

¶ Among the hard-working Labrador fishermen was a rich man who had oppressed them, but whom they believed to be strong enough to defy them. Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, the medical missionary, who is also a magistrate, went to the offender and told him that he must confess his sin and pay back to the fishermen a thousand dollars. He cursed the missionary. At the next church service the doctor announced that a sinful man would confess his sin that night. They couldn't believe that the rich sinner would yield. At the evening service, Dr. Grenfell asked them to keep their seats while he went after the sinner. He found the man at a brother's house on his knees in prayer, with all the family.

"Prayer," said Grenfell, "is a good thing in its place, but it doesn't 'go' here. Come with me."

He meekly went, and was led up the aisle, where all could see him, and, after the doctor had described the great sin of which he was guilty, he asked, "Did you do this thing?" "I did." "You are an evil man of whom the people should beware?" "I am." "You deserve the punishment of man and God." "I do."

At the end of it all the doctor told the man that the good God would forgive him if he should ask in true faith and repentance, but that the people, being human, could not. For a whole year, he charged the people, they must not speak to that man; but if,

[1] J. Keble.

at the end of that time, he had shown an honest disposition to mend his ways, they might take him to their hearts.

¶ In the inland territories of Arabia there are orchards and fruit trees, green tablelands and springing fountains of water; it is indeed one of the richest and most beautiful countries in the world. But it is difficult to believe that, as we watch its sterile, forbidding coasts. The port of Aden, touched at by most travellers to the East, gives an idea of what Tartarus itself must be like. The normal temperature is torment, even to those inured to the great heat of the tropics. Not a blade of grass is to be seen upon the hillsides, rain falls perhaps once in three or four years, verdureless rocks tower towards the molten heavens like pitiless rivals. And yet these sterile, forbidding, fire-scathed rocks are the gateway into a country fair as Eden and flowing with milk and honey. So is it with this hard, inexorable, repugnant duty of confession. It is the grim gateway leading on to green pastures and still waters, to sabbatic rest and abounding blessedness. The more specific and outspoken our confession the better for our health of soul and for the rapidity and completeness of our spiritual restoration.[1]

3. Why should we confess, if God already knows our sin? The answer is that confession is not meant to inform God, but *to train us into a personal relation with Him.* Think of any human relationship, the relation of a father or a mother to their children. Supposing the child, the son we will say, has done something wrong, has outraged and done violence to his home. He has set out upon a bad career. The father or mother would wish for, pray for, seek for, his amendment; but yet we know that, they could not, ought not to be satisfied by any mere amendment in the outward routine of life. It would be felt by all right-minded people to be superficial. We shall say if his heart is changed then there must be sorrow too, there must be regret, and the expression of regret and sorrow and penitence for the hearts he has wounded, for the lives that he has outraged, for the love so freely lavished upon him that he has scouted.

¶ It is recorded of Leonardo da Vinci that while painting his famous picture representing the "Last Supper," he quarrelled violently with a former friend. In order to injure this man in a lasting manner he painted for the face of Judas the face of his old friend with whom he had quarrelled. But when endeavouring to portray the face of the Saviour, Da Vinci utterly failed to do

[1] T. G. Selby, *The God of the Frail*, 102.

justice to the ideal face, and arose from every attempt with feelings of despair. When some time had passed by, Da Vinci relented in his harsh treatment of his friend and wiped out the face of Judas. And it is recorded that on the night following the day on which he did this outward act of forgiveness, he saw in vision Christ standing before him. Da Vinci saw the face of Christ more vividly than he ever saw it in his supreme moments of exalted inspiration, and so lasting was the impression that he was able on the next day to transfer to the picture that face of Christ which we see in the picture to-day.

4. Confession of sins, as distinct from the vague acknowledgment of sin, is a partial security against the further spreading of sin within the soul. There are some poisonous fungi which grow only in the dark, and sin is such a growth. The contagion, to use another illustration, is lessened the moment you open the windows of the soul and let in the fresh air of heaven. If you shut the soul up within itself, you will only harbour fresh seeds of transgression within the heart. No one can have gone to God in penitent confession and prayer without being conscious that the act of confession has made it harder, and not easier, to sin again.

¶ In all literature there can hardly be a nobler instance of confession, and the glorious results which follow, than that which Dante made of his own sinfulness, by the terrific condemnation which he puts into the mouth of Beatrice when she comes to him on the top of the mountain of Purgatory. It seems as though in the "Convivio" he tried to explain away the moral confusion and delinquency into which he fell after the death of Beatrice. But he found it could not be done. No skill in allegorizing, no subtlety of philosophy, would make it any other than moral failure. So Dante decided on a nobler course. He left the "Convivio" unfinished, and took the way of open confession, by making Beatrice condemn him in the most scathing language when he meets her on the mount, and by admitting that to her stinging reproofs he had no reply. Overwhelmed with shame he swooned away; but in that moment of uttermost exposure and disgrace he was set free. When he awoke he had been washed in Lethe, with the remembrance of the sin gone for ever. Then, and only then, was he ready for the blessed companionship of Beatrice and the ascent to heaven. There in the heart of his immortal Comedy he has set his own confession, telling all who read it that there is but one way to get free from sin—the humiliating way of confession; telling us also that without confession there can be

no fellowship with the pure and good, or any heaven in the presence of God.

III.

Commanding Forgiveness.

1. *Forgiveness is a free gift.*—That is, it affords the same revelation of love as we find in a child's or a friend's or a lover's pardon, and indeed in all self-sacrifice. It does not spring from any merit, anything done. Like all the beauties and graces of life, it is not based on necessity or justice but is an unbought gift of that heart of the Eternal which is "most wonderfully kind." For the world of spirits lives on the rich *generosity* of God. And of all its instances none is comparable to that of pardon; none so dear and wonderful as that grace of forgiveness for which His Son once died upon the Cross, that men, the worst and the weakest, might live unto Him for ever.

¶ Guizot once wrote in an album, "I have learned in my long life two rules of prudence: the first is to forgive much, and the second is never to forget." Under this Thiers wrote, "A little forgetting would not detract from the sincerity of the forgiveness." Then Bismarck added the words, "As for me, I have learned to forget much, and to ask to be forgiven much."[1]

¶ It is said that only once in his career did Napoleon give way to pity. It was in October 1806. Three weeks before, in the battle of Jena, he had laid Prussia submissive at his feet. He was now busy with the spoliation of Berlin. But the Prince of Hatzfeld had proved a traitor to him. He was arrested. The death warrant had been signed. For two days he had languished in prison, awaiting the execution of the decree. His wife believed him innocent. For five hours she had stood without in the street, waiting for an audience with the Emperor. At last he came. With tears and entreaties she pleaded that her husband might be spared, for "she knew that he was innocent." Napoleon gazed with those terrible grey-blue eyes upon her tear-stained face—and said nothing. The suspense was awful. At last he turned to Talleyrand and held out his hand. Talleyrand placed in his hand a letter. He handed it to the kneeling princess. "Whose writing is that, Madame?" The princess eagerly scanned the lines, and as her eyes recognized the signature, she let the paper fall with a

[1] J. R. Miller, *Devotional Hours with the Bible.*

pitiful cry. "Is that your husband's writing, Madame?" But sobs were the only answer. Then for once Napoleon softened into pity as he said, "Talleyrand." "Sire." "What other evidence have we of the Prince of Hatzfeld's treachery?" "None other, sire." "Princess," said Napoleon tenderly, "put that letter in the fire yonder, and then we shall have none." The tell-tale sheet fluttered into the fire, and the last bit of evidence against the prince had perished for ever.

2. *Forgiveness is founded on the nature of God:* it is the outcome of His justice. "He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins."

(1) In forgiving us God is *faithful* to Himself. The supreme truth about God is that He is our Father, and if God is to be faithful He must be faithful as a Father; and when one who is meant to be His child in likeness and in truth places himself in the position of penitent, and stands in the light of true confession, God would be untrue to His Fatherhood did He not forgive. God's forgiveness is the ever-present breath of His Fatherhood. God is a living God, Fatherhood His very inner life, and it flames all through this universe. It is no cold and merely stately thing; it is the burning breath of His life; and that breath comes to us first and last on this earth as the play of His Spirit in that pardon which takes us, imperfect as we are, and gives us room to live, in His presence and in His love.

(2) In forgiving our sins God is also *righteous.* When a man confesses his sins in the genuine sense, he has the right to be forgiven. Confession makes him another man. He is not the man he was before. Before, he was one with his sin, and his sin was the truth about him; but now that he has used that strange power of repentance which God has made part of our being—the repentance which means changing your mind and turning right round—he has put his sin from him, and it is, in the sight of the perfect truth, his no longer. God would not be righteous did He not recognize the truth about that man. "And this is the message which we have heard from him, and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Therefore no one on earth can gauge or recognize the truth about the penitent as God does; and, if we confess our sins, God is righteous to forgive us.

¶ Take the case of some human act of forgiveness. A man does me a wrong. The act being once done is irremediable, and the loss or injury of it must be borne by some one. If he makes me amends, though the evil originally done is not annihilated, yet the sentiment of justice is satisfied. In some cases of wrong-doing, however, he cannot make amends, or he may entirely refuse even to try to make amends. Thereupon I forgive him, that is to say, I virtually take upon myself the penalty which he ought to have suffered. We see clearly that this is what forgiveness means in the case of a money debt: where the creditor forgives the debt, he suffers the loss himself. And so it is with forgiveness of other kinds of injury. By freely forgiving the wrong-doer I do not undo his act, but I consent to suffer the injury and waive my right to compensation. If I go beyond this and refuse all his offers of satisfaction, I voluntarily take upon myself the wrong-doer's burden, and set him free from every obligation except that of gratitude.

From human forgiveness to Divine forgiveness is a long step, but they both seem to be regarded as on the same footing in the Lord's Prayer, where we are taught to say, "Forgive us, as we forgive." May we not therefore believe that up to a certain point the analogy holds, and that Divine like human forgiveness involves vicarious suffering? Man has duties towards God which he has not fulfilled. God forgives him. God thus willingly takes the loss upon Himself. Without this there can be no forgiveness, for even God, so far as our finite intelligence is able to conceive the matter, cannot annihilate the past. God has been despised and rejected by His creatures. How can they be forgiven? Only by God's consenting to be despised and rejected. That they may escape—sooner than that they should suffer—God foregoes His right. Men deny His existence: He consents to be denied, in order that He may forgive. Men do all kinds of evil against Him: He submits to them, not because He must, but of His own will. He endures everything because He forgives. It is only by enduring that He can forgive. His last prayer is for the forgiveness of His murderers.[1]

¶ When a few years ago, a Mohammedan convert at Calcutta came to Lal Behouri Sing for baptism, the missionary asked him what was the vital point in which he found Mohammedanism most defective, and which he found that Christianity satisfactorily supplied. His prompt reply was, "Mohammedanism is full of the mercy of God; and while I felt no real consciousness of guilt as the breaker of God's law this satisfied me; but when I felt my

[1] H. G. Woods, *At the Temple Church*, 226.

guilt I felt that it was not with God's mercy, but with His justice, that I had first to do. Now to meet the claims of God's justice Mohammedanism had made no provision, but this is the very thing that I have found fully accomplished by the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross; and, therefore, Christianity is now the only adequate religion for me, a guilty sinner."[1]

Weigh all my faults and follies righteously,
  Omissions and commissions, sin on sin;
  Make deep the scale, O Lord, to weigh them in;
Yea, set the Accuser vulture-eyed to see
All loads ingathered which belong to me;
  That so in life the judgment may begin,
  And Angels learn how hard it is to win
One solitary sinful soul to Thee.
I have no merits for a counterpoise:
  Oh vanity my work and hastening day,
What can I answer to the accusing voice?
Lord, drop Thou in the counterscale alone
  One Drop from Thine own Heart, and overweigh
My guilt, my folly, even my heart of stone.[2]

IV.

Ensuring Cleansing.

1. God is faithful and just, not merely to forgive us our sins but to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We need something else besides forgiveness. Forgiveness of sins is much, but cleansing from the defilement of sin is more. Yet this spring of evil in the heart may be dried up, and what was once the sepulchre of living death transformed into a sanctuary of Divine life. The essence of the Gospel is not the remittance of condemnation, but the sanctification of the soul.

¶ The germs of disease may lurk in our system and necessitate care, yet be so controlled by a healthy constitution as not to overcome us, just as an enemy who has invaded a country may be practically dispossessed, though he may retain a stronghold here and there, and make destructive sallies into the surrounding districts. So, sin may be in us, though it may not have dominion over us; and though it have no dominion it may yet enfeeble, obstruct, and distract us. In fact, not to struggle against sin is

[1] C. Stanford, *Symbols of Christ*, 301. [2] Christina G. Rossetti.

the direct evidence of our being completely under its subjection, as there is no slavery so abject as that which tamely acquiesces in its servitude. To struggle against it, but unsuccessfully, betokens an awakened conscience, but a heart not yet strengthened by the grace of Christ. To struggle against it successfully, though with a certain measure of loss and damage—like an army which conquers though at the cost of many wounded and slain—is the case of the Christian who knows sin is always present with him, to be watched and fought against, and imposing the constant necessity of confession and prayer for forgiveness and cleansing.[1]

Since succour to the feeblest of the wise
Is charge of nobler weight
Than the security
Of many and many a foolish soul's estate,
This I affirm,
Though fools will fools more confidently be:
Whom God doth once with heart to heart befriend,
He does so till the end;
And having planted life's miraculous germ,
One sweet pulsation of responsive love,
He sets him sheer above,
Not sin and bitter shame
And wreck of fame,
But Hell's insidious and more black attempt,
The envy, malice and pride,
Which men who share so easily condone
That few even list such ills as these to hide.
From these unalterably exempt
Through the remember'd grace
Of that divine embrace,
Of his sad errors none,
Though gross to blame,
Shall cast him lower than the cleansing flame,
Nor make him quite depart
From the small flock named "after God's own heart,"
And to themselves unknown.
Nor can he quail
In faith, nor flush nor pale
When all the other idiot people spell
How this or that new prophet's word belies
Their last high oracle;
But constantly his soul
Points to its pole,

[1] C. Moinet, *The Great Alternative*, 172.

Even as the needle points and knows not why
And, under the ever-changing clouds of doubt,
When others cry,
"The stars, if stars there were,
Are quenched and out!"
To him, uplooking t'ward the hills for aid,
Appear, at need display'd,
Gaps in the low-hung gloom, and, bright in air,
Orion or the Bear.[1]

2. The Divine faithfulness and justice are pledged to "cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness." The discovery of ineffaceable spots on the soul would be a fatal reflection on the spiritual perception and sanctifying power of the Divine Redeemer. We are told that a New York lapidary submitted a diamond to the grinding machine for the space of three months. At the end of that time the stone was found to be absolutely unaffected by the ordeal, and the lapidary gave up the task in despair. But the revolutions of the wheels of redemption will never fail to polish and perfect the believer's soul. God can heal, not only the putrifying sores of flagrant vice, but also the unrealized wounds of the deadly bacilli of evil that secrete themselves in the deepest inwardness of our being. The electric beams of His righteousness reveal the hidden blights that taint the motive and pollute the springs of thought. Sin knows no "law of protective colouring" by means of which it can escape the detection of God. God discerns iniquity in its microscopic inception, and cleanses the soul from the faintest stains.

O Foolish Soul! to make thy count
For languid falls and much forgiven,
When like a flame thou mightest mount
To storm and carry heaven.

A life so faint,—is this to live?
A goal so mean,—is this a goal?
Christ love thee, remedy, forgive,
Save thee, O foolish Soul![2]

[1] Coventry Patmore. [2] Christina G. Rossetti.

An Advocate with the Father.

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An Advocate with the Father.

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.—1 John ii. 1, 2.

1. There is an Oriental courtesy which will present you with whatever you may happen to admire, and yet would be dumbfounded if the offer were taken seriously. Do we not often regard the large promises of the Bible as offers of this kind? We do not take their words at their face value. We regard them as depreciated currency. And the reason is partly that we as Christians rightly assume that we have the right to use the language of the New Testament; but as our experience is not equal to the greatness of the words, we tone down the meaning of the words to make it level with our experience. We read, for instance, of "joy unspeakable and full of glory," of "peace that passeth all understanding"; but since we know no such experiences, we conclude that they are not to be known; that such words are not to be taken literally; that they are instances of a conventional religious exaggeration; that they may become true in the future; that if they have ever been true, it was only in Apostolic times. Anyhow it would be absurd to expect to find them true now.

So it is that we are apt to treat this text. Its language is very bold and strong. St. John seems to say that if only we rightly use what he tells us, we shall be freed from all sin. It is a claim which sounds as extravagant as if a doctor should claim to have found a panacea for all disease. "I write unto you that ye may not sin."

2. Perhaps we might say (though we must not abuse the saying) that St. John had two pictures in his mind as he

described the Christian life, the one, the ideal Christian, the other, the actual believer. Think of an artist standing before a great picture which he is painting. He has two visions of it—one on the canvas and the other in his own mind. That on the canvas is imperfect; the outlines are there, but the colouring is inharmonious; the expression is feeble, the life is wanting, and the subduing power which belongs to a great work has yet to be created. Not so the vision in the mind, *that* is perfect. The forms are finished, every part is complete in itself, and right in its relation to every other; the colours mingle and agree like notes in sweetest music, and the picture as a whole is instinct with life, and clothed with beauty and grandeur. Now suppose the artist were to sit down to write a description of this picture. Looking at the canvas, he would speak of the imperfections of the work; but gazing upon the vision within, he would write of its completeness, power, and majesty. This is just what St. John did. Looking upon the actual Christian he spoke of sin, confession, pardon, and spiritual warfare; but while doing this the vision of the ideal hovered before his mind, and he wrote: "He sinneth not —he cannot sin."

¶ There was one department of human life which was strange and unfamiliar to Westcott, and in which he moved with rare and doubtful steps. It was the world of sin. He told us little about it. It was alien to him. Why pry into it, or analyze it, or explore it? He loathed it; and passed it by, wherever it was possible. He preferred to uplift the ideal, and leave it to work its own victory. If the sun were but up, would not the night, by that very fact, have departed? Somehow, that dark world is more tenacious and persistent than he quite allowed for. When his Archdeacons presented to him the carefully collected case of an Incumbent who had broken every Commandment, he dismissed it on the ground (so it was reported) that his category of humanity refused to admit the existence of such a sinner. As the terrible facts of his northern towns forced themselves upon his notice, he became more vividly aware of the awful volume of evil. But still, however deeply this disturbed him, it did not provoke him to examine more closely the conditions of sin. It remained a perturbing misery rather than an intelligible experience. His purity of soul recoiled from its mystery, and still sought for refuge in asserting the Ideal. This accounts for a certain white intensity of optimism which characterizes his writings, and which

keeps them slightly aloof from things as they are. We wonder, as we read, whether he has quite taken the full measure of the facts. We sometimes feel as if the atmosphere were too fine to live in, and as if the springs of human motive were left untouched. There is no scathing light suddenly let in, to lay bare the secrets of the soul, such as flashes from the pages of Newman's sermons. We are not brought up to judgment at the awful bar. This work was not for him. Rather it was his to persuade us that all things were possible with God; that evil was an alien thing, and might be done away; that human nature had the impulse in it of eternity; that the entire body of humanity was moving towards its redemption in Christ Jesus.[1]

3. St. John is not making terms with sin, first setting up deliverance from sin as an ideal, and then admitting that after all sin will be actual. St. John is here making further provision against sin. If one sin excluded us for ever from God's fellowship, and for ever thrust us back into the outer darkness, we would be hopeless indeed. It would not be worth our while to rouse ourselves to any effort to escape sin. But it is not so. We have an Advocate, and a Propitiation that abundantly prevails. And so, too, we can deal with all that mass of sin which we feel as a crushing weight on us, or see as a barrier excluding and shutting up our approach to God.

4. Notice, further, that he addresses the whole Church of God. "My little children"—it is the language of venerable age. The writer had lived long; sixty years at least had passed since he beheld the Incarnate Glory, the glory of God in the face of Christ. It is the language of ineffable love. He had lived so near the heart of love that he had become impregnated and saturated with it. He might be old, but *that* was young; he might be weak, but *that* was strong; his mind might be giving way beneath the pressure of age and infirmity, but the eyes of his heart were as clear-sighted as in the days when he first beheld Christ on the shores of the lake. It is the language of great authority. At the feet of this man other inspired teachers might have been prepared to sit. We can imagine that many of the minor prophets of the Old Testament, for instance, would have been glad to form a class around this venerable man, whose head had leaned upon

[1] H. Scott Holland, *Personal Studies*, 137.

the bosom of Christ, and who had known Him face to face. Sitting in his chair at Ephesus, or speaking from the Isle of Patmos, he addresses the entire Church of every country, as he says, with the weight of venerable age, with the tone of ineffable love, with the accent of invincible authority—"My little children."

The text may be divided into three parts—

I. The Peril.
II. The Pleader.
III. The Plea.

I.

The Peril.

Though the aim of the Apostle was to lead men into the truth, so that they might not sin, he knew that this could not be accomplished by a stroke of magic. It was a moral achievement to be brought about by moral means. And so there might be momentary failure. Sin crouched at the door, and the Accuser was always ready to drag the culprit into Court. There was provision, however, against the peril.

1. The form of the verb in the Greek requires us to understand not a continuance or living in habitual sin, but committing an act of sin. St. John has no uplifting message for the man who lives in the unrestrained practice of sin. This he calls "walking in darkness." Such a life of habitual sin is expressed by the present tense of the verb, suggesting continuance, as in chap. iii. 6, 8. To be overtaken by a temptation and to fall into sin—a sin which is repudiated by all that is deepest in him, a sin which he at once hates and mourns, is a very different thing, and is expressed by a tense which suggests an act, not a habit. He who so falls may be sure, from the Word of God, that he has One standing by the throne to plead for him, who presents the atonement, not on behalf of the habitual, unconcerned, or half-repentant, half-persistent sinner, but of him who says from his grieved, penitent heart, "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."

2. Now sin in the believer has two aspects, that of direct and positive violation of known duty, and that of coming short of God's glory—a deficiency in that perfection of love, of tireless consecration, of joyous realization of obedience to God's holy will, which characterized our Lord. When the Apostle says that he writes to his little children in the faith, that they may not sin, it is clear that it is to the first of these that he refers. There is provision in the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ, in virtue of which we are delivered from all known sin, and kept by the power of God, through faith, from things which we once wrought without shame or remorse. But at the close of a day in which we have realized that keeping power to the uttermost, who is there of us that is not aware of having come short of the glory of God? We might have been more earnest and devoted and single-hearted. And in all this we need the forgiveness and cleansing of our Heavenly Father.

¶ Of Mrs. Bellamy Gordon's stories of her childhood one remains in my memory because of her manner of telling it. "My love, I once did something for which I feel I can never be forgiven. When I was very young my father was in charge of the Coastguard, and we lived at Portpatrick, and I went to a dancing-school at Stranraer with the children of the neighbouring gentry. But on the great day, once a year, when all the world came to see us dance, the children of the townspeople joined our class. There was among them one little boy with golden curls whom we all admired very much, but he always chose to dance with a pretty little girl, the child of a shopkeeper in the town. I think the master must have been a bit of a flunkey, for he said, at the opening of the exhibition, "Now, little Missie Gordon may choose her partner." I looked for the boy with the golden curls: he was standing beside his little partner, and—oh, my dear!—I carried him off, and *she* cried; and I don't see how I am ever to be forgiven!"[1]

3. The more sinless men become the more do they hate sin. The greatest outpourings of agony over sin have not come from vicious and gross sinners when they were converted, but from the lips of the holiest in God's Church. Just as discord in music gives little pain to the unmusical but intense pain to the musical, so sin gives little pain to sinful people. Just as discord in music

[1] Mrs. E. M. Sellar, *Recollections and Impressions*, 246.

becomes more and more painful as we get a better ear for harmony, so sin becomes more and more painful as we grow holier and approach nearer to the harmony of the Divine life. Thus it is that the most heartfelt expression of agony for sin comes from the best Christians in the world. Blemishes that were not noticed when we were far from God "become lit up with torturing clearness when we approach the ineffable light of Him whose stainless beauty casts the shadow of failure on all that is not Himself, and who charges His very angels with moral folly." And as men grow more Christlike they realize more and more the curse of that alienation from God, which is the worst consequence of sin.

¶ Before me lies a faded manuscript in the handwriting of a Puritan scholar, containing notes of his conversations with "that holy primate of Ireland, Doctor James Ussher, in the year wherein he died." Early in that year he paid a visit to the writer, who made humble request to him that he would give him on paper his thoughts touching the mysteries of justification and sanctification, and obtained his promise to do so. A few months later he visited him again, but without the promised document, and said in apology for his failure, "I did begin to write, but when I came to do so of *sanctification*, that is of the new creature that God forms by His Spirit in every soul which He doth in truth regenerate, I found so little of it wrought in myself that, apprehending I should write but as a parrot speaketh, by rote, and without knowledge, I durst not presume to do so." A few days later still, in the moment when this meek and holy servant of Christ left the world, the attendant, who saw his lips tremble and bent over to catch the whisper of his last breath, heard it pass away with the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." [1]

O God of the Sunlight sweep away,
The memory of that evil day,
That drags me down to death:
Wash me, and draw me up above,
Cleanse me in Thine own cleansing love.
With Thine own quickening breath:
Make me one with the endless sea;
One with the wind on the rain-drenched lea—
One with Thee—God of Love.[2]

[1] C. Stanford, *Symbols of Christ*, 317.
[2] D. Mountjoy, *The Hills of Hell*, 21.

II

The Pleader.

Jesus Christ is our Advocate, our Paraclete, the One called by God Himself to our side in our hour of extremity.

In the literature of devotion the Holy Spirit is frequently styled "the Paraclete." The name is nowhere found in our English version of the Bible, yet it is Scriptural, being a transliteration of the Greek word which is rendered "Comforter" in St. John's Gospel (xiv. 16, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7) and "Advocate" in his First Epistle (ii. 1); and, understanding that the latter is the right rendering, we discover a wealth of profound truth in these passages.

In the days of His flesh Jesus was God's Advocate with men. He told the Eleven in the Upper Room that, though He was going away, God would not be left without an Advocate on the earth to plead His cause and win men to faith. "He shall give you another Advocate, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 16, 17). The Holy Spirit has come in the room of Jesus, and still from age to age performs the office of God's Advocate with men. But the advocacy of Jesus has not ceased. He is our Advocate in Heaven, pleading our cause with God.

1. Our Advocate is in the place of influence and power. We have an Advocate *with the Father*. That is no mere proposition, no mere indication of place. It is a mystic term, standing for something too deep for human language. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was *with* God;" not just a position, not neighbourhood, not place, is the primary thought, but an ineffable relation of oneness. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." And so we have an Advocate with the Father. "I and the Father are one." The advocacy of our blessed Saviour is not felt by the Eternal Father to be a presentation from without; it is not an external pressure thrusting itself against God to move Him to our aid. The advocacy of Jesus Christ throbs within that bosom of the Father wherein the Son of God for ever is.

The language is figurative. It calls up to our minds the

familiar figure of the ordinary intercessor, who pleads for some petitioner, and gets some indulgence for him, which the granter would not have conceded, but for the influence thus brought upon him to change his previous decision. Such a conception might apply to the Homeric and Virgilian ideas of Jupiter, alternately besought by Juno and Venus on behalf of Greeks or of Trojans, but it has no place outside of heathen mythology. Jesus Himself warned His disciples against so thinking of God, telling them that the Father knew their needs, and could be depended on much more than earthly parents to hear His children's prayer. He went further. After He had said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth," He added, as if to exclude the notion that His prayer would be the inducing motive with the Father, "I say not, I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you."

2. Our Advocate is righteous in character. He is "Jesus Christ *the righteous*." He is at once God our righteousness and humanity righteous through God in it. Jesus Christ is both parts or sides in the unity of God and man, both *gratia gratians* and *gratia gratiata*, the Divine grace that graces or confers, and the human grace received and shared. The human righteousness of Jesus Christ, which alone is or can become ours, was humanly both received and wrought by Himself: it was a righteousness alike of perfect faith and of perfect obedience. It was a righteousness of which His "blood" was the sole condition, and is the only symbol. Nothing short of that perfect attitude towards sin which is death at once to it and from it, and that perfect attitude towards holiness which is the life of God Himself in us, constitutes the righteousness that Jesus Christ was, and the righteousness that He gives. His blood was not only His own actual death to sin, it must be no less ours also.

¶ When Sir Walter Raleigh, involved in a network of malice, had been brought to trial for high treason, and unjustly condemned to die, his mind turned from the thought of the earthly court, in which he had suffered vile insult and cruel wrong, to the thought of the court in heaven; from the king's attorney here to Him whom he called "the King's Attorney" there; and on being ferried from Westminster to that dark cell in the Tower, which

has often been visited with hushed footsteps and hushed breath, he wrote, by lamplight, these words:—

From thence to heaven's bribeless hall,
Where no corrupted voices brawl,
No conscience molten into gold,
No forged accuser bought or sold;
No cause deferred, no vain-spent journey,
For Christ is there, the King's Attorney.
And when the grand twelve-million jury
Of our sins, with direful fury,
'Gainst our souls black verdicts give,
Christ pleads His death, and then we live.
Be Thou my Speaker, taintless Pleader,
Unblotted Lawyer, true Proceeder!
Thou giv'st salvation, even for alms,
Not with a bribèd lawyer's palms.
This, then, is mine eternal plea,
To Him that made heaven, earth, and sea.

In language so grand in its truth, and so touching in its antique simplicity, did the great Englishman give his reason for trusting Jesus, and declare his resolution to commit his misrepresented cause into His hands alone.[1]

3. He has knowledge and sympathy. It has happened before now, even in forensic history, that an advocate has felt forced to relinquish his brief, in consequence of some unexpected disclosure that made proceeding with the case a course that would hurt his self-respect, or compromise his reputation. Secrets have come to light in the life of a child that have silenced even a mother's advocacy, and made love itself confess that it had no more to say. But we never need fear that for reasons like these Christ will abandon our cause, or fail in our defence. Before we confide to Him a single secret His acquaintance with our whole life is intimate and perfect. What was said of Him by the beloved disciple holds true for ever, He "needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man."

¶ H. M. Stanley, in Africa, had much trouble with his men on account of their inherent propensity to steal, the results of which brought upon the expedition much actual disaster At last Stanley doomed to death the next man caught stealing. His grief

[1] C. Stanford, *Symbols of Christ*, 297.

and distress were unbounded when the next thief, detected in a case of peculiar flagrancy, was found to be Uledi, the bravest, truest, noblest of his dusky followers. Uledi had saved a hundred lives, Stanley's among the number. He had performed acts of the most brilliant daring, always successful, always faithful, always kind. Must Uledi die? He called all his men around him in a council. He explained to them the gravity of Uledi's crime. He reminded them of his stern decree, but said he was not hard enough to enforce it against Uledi. His arm was not strong enough to lift the gun that would kill Uledi, and he would not bid one of them do what he could not do himself. But some punishment, and a hard one, must be meted out. What should it be? The council must decide. They took a vote. Uledi must be flogged. When the decision was reached, Stanley standing, Uledi crouching at his feet and the solemn circle drawn closely around them, one man whose life Uledi had saved under circumstances of frightful peril, stood forth and said, "Give me half the blows, master." Then another said in the faintest accents, while tears fell from his eyes, "Will the master give this slave leave to speak?" "Yes," said Stanley. The Arab came forward and knelt by Uledi's side. His words came slowly, and now and then a sob broke them. "The master is wise," he said; "he knows all that has been, for he writes them in a book. I am black, and know not. Nor can I remember what is past. What we saw yesterday is to-day forgotten. But the master forgets nothing. He puts it all in that book. Each day something is written. Let your slave fetch the book, master, and turn its leaves. Maybe you will find some words there about Uledi. Maybe there is something that tells how he saved Zaidi from the white waters of the cataract; how he saved many men—how many, I forget; Bin Ali, Mabruki, Kooi Kusi—others, too; how he is worthier than any three of us; how he always listens when the master speaks, and flies forth at his word. Look, master, at the book. Then, if the blows must be struck, Shumari will take half and I the other half. The master will do what is right. Saywa has spoken." And Saywa's speech deserves to live for ever. Stanley threw away his whip. "Uledi is free," he said. "Shumari and Saywa are pardoned."

4. He never wearies. He is our Advocate continually. In this respect He presents a contrast to the Levitical priesthood. That priesthood passed from one to another as death removed the successive occupants of the office. But Christ abideth for ever, and there is no interruption to the continuity of His media-

tion. Unbroken it prolongs itself from age to age, unchanging in its character, and unintermittent in duration. For He is made a priest, "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." It is not, then, on the fact of a past atonement, but on the power of a living Saviour, that our safety depends. No doubt the past atonement is essential to the efficacy of His priesthood, but still it is not the Cross that is the object of faith, nor any one event in the history of the incarnation, but Christ Himself who "was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." To believe in a fact is one thing, but to trust in a living person is another. That Christ died would be of no use to us, if He were not alive now, and alive, so to speak, more mightily than He ever was before. Other men death removes from their intercourse with the world. It brings their direct influence and agency to an end. But death did not so affect Him. It produced no change in His activity, except to widen its range and intensify its energy. And now the whole of His priestly functions are taken up, and absorbed in this one attitude or act of intercession.

III.

The Plea.

1. Why is a plea needed in the Court of Mercy?

(1) *The claims of a Father's heart have to be satisfied.*—God is righteous, and He observes the due relations in which He stands to us, and we have to observe the relations in which we stand to Him; but He is a Father, and we are His children, and what God wants as a Father—to put it into a word—is the answer of love. Taking that word in its comprehensive sense, implying all that it involves, what God asks from us is the life of love. What God has hungered for through all the ages is what we faintly hunger for as we look upon our children. What we have to satisfy and to expiate is not the anger of a dishonoured Deity, but the hungering and unsatisfied heart of a Father. The anger of a dishonoured Deity may be fierce, though any flame will burn itself out to ashes in the long-run; but the heart of a Father that has never yet drained to its depths the full cup of children's love—that is the

central pain of the universe, and it is the throb of that hunger and thirst that moves through all created things. The inner truth of this world of man as it is, is that the heart of God has gone unsatisfied, lonely, starved. "Righteous Father, the world knew thee not." There is God's agony; there is God's pain. There, if you want the word, is man's debt—the debt we shall never make up, the love we have failed to give since the world was born.

(2) *The claims of justice must be met.*—God is not only Father, He is sovereign; sin is rejection of His law, rebellion against His majesty, and its forgiveness must be in harmony with law and the inviolable claims of His throne. Before God can receive back the sinner there is wrath to be averted in some way by which righteousness shall be equally honoured with mercy. And man needs such propitiation too; his moral sense must be satisfied in any adequate redemption, ceaseless sacrifices at innumerable shrines witness to the conviction that God must punish sin, and to those who read His word and see what He has said that conviction becomes invincible. Divine love would deserve no reverence, did it ignore righteousness.

¶ Righteousness must be vindicated, and then grace becomes sure. Righteousness must be satisfied, and then eternity becomes heaven! The law must be made honourable, then the Gospel will be given to us, with the assurance of eternal permanence—but not without.[1]

2. Christ's plea is His propitiation. This is, so to speak, the basis on which it proceeds, the great argument which makes it conclusive. And what can make it more so? It is true our sins cry out for vengeance, but Christ's blood cries still louder for mercy. And its cry continues sustained, penetrating through all obstructions, resistless, clear, never failing to enter into the ears of God. It speaks more mightily than that of Abel. As the blood of the first martyr refused to be covered, but uttered its voice from the ground, and brought down sure judgment on the guilty, so, and with a still greater certainty, will Christ's blood plead for us, in spite of all our sins and their attempts to overbear it, till it wins its desired result—a result that includes not only pardon but all that His sacrifice was offered to secure. And as

[1] J. Parker.

the sacrifice was perfect, so will be its plea. As it made an end of sin so it has abolished all that withstands and imperils the attainment of its end.

(1) *It is a sufficient plea.*—The propitiation was the mercy-seat—the golden slab which, according to the Divine prescription, covered the ancient ark. It would, therefore, be of the same size as the tables of stone deposited within, and be encrusted with the blood of innumerable days of Atonement. When Jesus is said to be a propitiation, we are taught that His perfect obedience to the will of God measures and overlaps the full demand of God's holy law, whilst His precious blood has atoned for our sins.

(2) *It is an all-embracing plea*—"for the whole world."—In Christ all mankind rendered obedience to that law, and suffered beneath its penalty. All mankind, therefore, in that act was redeemed from the incidence of Adam's sin. Topsy, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, says: "Why should I be punished? I never ate that apple!" Certainly; neither Topsy nor any one else will go to hell because Adam ate that apple; for whatever loss accrued to the race from that act of sin has been more than made good by the act of righteousness of the One Man Jesus Christ.

¶ Why, then, is the world in darkness? Suppose an Act of Parliament capable of conferring great benefits on the working class, and out of which they may contract themselves. The Act may be rendered quite inoperative. So men by their sin may contract themselves out of the benefits of Christ's death. Our Lord tells of a man who had been forgiven, but shortly after took his brother by the throat, and insisted that he should pay him what he owed. In that act he cancelled his own forgiveness, and his lord directed that he should be given over to the tormentors till he should pay all the original debt. So, by their wilful rejection of Christ, men may contract themselves out of the benefits of His work on their behalf. The sin of which the world is guilty since the great sacrifice for sin has been made is the sin of rejection—"because they believe not on me."[1]

[1] F. B. Meyer, *In the Beginning God*, 188.

The Love that Confers Sonship.

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THE LOVE THAT CONFERS SONSHIP.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are.—1 John iii. 1.

1. ST. JOHN writes this Epistle on the highest peak of the sunlit summits of God's new revelation in Jesus Christ. The Epistle is full of brightness. Every sentence tingles, and pulses, and throbs with the joy of the daylight, and flashes back the glory in streaming brightness to heaven. "A new commandment write I unto you," so the music flows on, "because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth." How John basks and revels in the sunlight! Light streams everywhere around him. "God is light." "The light is shining." "We walk in the light, even as he is in the light." What has happened? The Dayspring has appeared from on high. The Sun of Righteousness has risen upon the world with healing in His beams. And then John sees the eternal light mirror itself on the clouded sky of this world in an arch of holy beauty, and his music grows soft and sweet as he sings, "God is love. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God."[1]

¶ The Missionary Ziegenbalg tells us that in translating this text with the aid of a Hindu youth, the youth rendered it "that we should be allowed to kiss His feet." When asked why he thus diverged from the text he said, "'Children of God!' that is too much—too high!" Such shrinking was excusable in heathen converts, to whom these truths came in a burst of light too dazzling for their weak eyes. It is not excusable in us. In us it involves nothing less than a denial of the faith which is the sole source of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.[2]

[1] J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, iii. 323.
[2] F. W. Farrar, *Truths to Live By*, 188.

2. The Apostle uses the word "children," not "sons" as in the Authorized Version. He would call attention, not as St. Paul, who uses "sons," to the adoptive act, but to the antecedent, eternal, natural relation. God has freely given us His love, in order that our title may be children of God—and, in the true reading, he adds, "and such we are." Children we now are, in recognized name, in real fact; what we shall be hereafter we know not; but that shall be manifested in due time; and when it is manifested, then, beloved, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. When we wake up after His likeness, we shall be satisfied with it. The image which we now bear shall become the perfect semblance. We shall be like clouds, cradled near the sun, dyed, bathed, transfused with its glowing beams; their lurid menace softened, their darkness palpitating with reflected splendour—their very substance transformed from gloom to whiteness, from whiteness to crimson, from crimson to gold, from gold to sunbeams —changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

Oh! how shall I, whose native sphere
  Is dark, whose mind is dim,
Before the Ineffable appear,
And on my naked spirit bear
  That uncreated beam?

There is a way for man to rise
  To that sublime abode:
An offering and a sacrifice,
A Holy Spirit's energies,
  An Advocate with God.

These, these prepare us for the sight
  Of Holiness above;
The sons of ignorance and night
May dwell in the Eternal Light!
  Through the Eternal Love.[1]

I.

The Wonder of the Father's Love.

1. God's love is original and spontaneous. Love is that mysterious power by which we live in the lives of others, and

[1] Thomas Binney.

are thus moved to benevolent and even self-sacrificing action on their behalf. Such love is, after all, one of the most universal things in humanity. But always natural human love is a flame that must be kindled and fed by some quality in its object. It finds its stimulus in physical instinct, in gratitude, in admiration, in mutual congeniality and liking. Always it is, in the first place, a passive emotion, determined and drawn forth by an external attraction. But the love of God is an ever-springing fountain. Its fires are self-kindled. It is love that shines forth in its purest splendour upon the unattractive, the unworthy, the repellent. Herein is love, in its purest essence and highest potency, not in our love to God, but in this, that God loved us. Hence follows the apparently paradoxical consequence, upon which the Epistle lays a unique emphasis, that our love to God is not even the most godlike manifestation of love in us. It is gratitude for His benefits, adoration of His perfections, our response to God's love to us, but not its closest reproduction in kind. In this respect, indeed, God's love to man and man's love to God form the opposite poles, as it were, of the universe of love, the one self-created and owing nothing to its object, the other entirely dependent upon and owing everything to the infinite perfection of its object; the one the overarching sky, the other merely its reflection on the still surface of the lake. And it is, as the Epistle insists, not in our love to God, but in our Christian love to our fellow-men, that the Divine love is reproduced, with a relative perfection, in us.

¶ In my old parish there was a little loch in the midst of the forest, and I was fond of visiting it. Its chief attraction for me was the multitude of wild birds which peopled its banks and islets; and once I observed a novelty. I had been accustomed to see there all manner of familiar water-fowl—coot, ducks, swans; but that evening I noticed others such as I had never seen before —birds of brilliant plumage, crimson, blue, and glossy green. And I recognized them as strangers from another clime than ours, from some far-off land where the air is warmer and the sun shines brighter and paints everything in gaudier hues. I said: "These are no natives: they are foreign birds"; and I learned by and by that they had been imported from Africa.

And this is precisely the thought in the Apostle's mind. "That love," he says, "the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, is a love which never sprang from earth's cold soil. It is from

some far-off region; it is from Heaven itself. Behold what unearthly love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" [1]

2. In the Apostle's eulogy of love we find his memories of Jesus crystallized. To St. John the love of God was something more than wonderful. He was now a hoary-headed saint. He had laid his head in his youth on Jesus' bosom, and was beginning to realize the love of God in Christ even then. Even then, as he looked up into those human eyes, the reality of God's love had flowed into his consciousness. But there was more to be known than he knew at the supper table. As he stood by the cross, it may be that in those moments, when faith triumphed, the love of God became still more a reality. As he gathered with that little chosen band round the Person of the risen Lord, and saw that Face radiant with resurrection glory, the love of God was already a stronger power within his being. As the mighty Spirit at Pentecost came down and shook the house, and filled their hearts, and as he himself, as one of the first missionaries, went forth to tell the glad tidings of great joy, the love of God had already begun to be a stronger power within him still. Now, his head is hoary, the winter of age has gathered round him, life is fast receding, the world is disappearing, and eternity is drawing near. But it would seem that in each fresh step of his human career he had attained a fresh revelation of this Divine object, and now, in his last days, he calls upon all the world to gaze upon it, as if it were the most attractive of all spectacles. "Behold," he says, as though he would fain draw aside the curtain of unbelief, and reveal to man that which man most requires to know,—"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us."

¶ The phrase which the Apostle employs is remarkable—"love the Father hath given to us." Not the love the Father hath felt, or manifested toward us, but the love He hath given to us. It reminds us of another remarkable passage in the Gospel of this same Apostle. "God so loved the world that *he gave*—He *gave*—his only begotten Son." As John began writing this sentence, "Behold what manner of love," it would seem that the love gathered shape and form before his mind, embodied itself in the form of the incarnate Son. It refused to remain an abstract conception, a mere principle. It took shape, it became the

[1] D. Smith, *Man's Need of God*, 139.

incarnate love,—God's unspeakable gift to man. And so John finished his sentence thus, "the Father *hath given* to us." And then there was another thought that would suggest the word "give." There was another way in which the Divine love was embodied before the eye of John. John saw that love embodied in the distinction, the honour, the glory conferred on those that believe in Jesus Christ. He saw the Divine love in the love-gift, the glorious bounty of God towards those who believe in Jesus Christ. And so John declares that the believer's title to power and honour is God's love-gift, the gift of His free love. You cannot go behind that love for an explanation. It is the gift of God's free elective love.[1]

3. The love of God finds its type and shadow in the love of parents for their children. There is no love that we understand so well as a parent's love. It is the first love we know, and every day of our early years gave us fresh and sweet illustrations of it. There is no love so pure, so disinterested, so unselfish. The affections of friendship and wedded life are strong, tender, passionate, and fervent, but in them there is always a more or less selfish joy. We get as much as we give. The parent's love for a little child looks for no return. It is unlimited, uncalculating grace. It is given freely before there can be the least thought or ability to reciprocate it. It is given to helplessness, feebleness, ignorance, incapacity. It is an immense delight in that which has nothing to commend itself. It is an unbounded joy in that which by ordinary reason should evoke only pity. It is a holy sentiment which sets at nought literal fact and common sense. There is no logic in it. It has no apparent cause. It is inexplicable. It is one of the great mysteries of life. We should not believe it possible if we had never seen it; yet it is everywhere, and it is everywhere a symbol of the Divine, a proof of the Divine. The love of the Almighty for us is wonderful. It is well-nigh incredible. But there it is! "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God."

¶ I have a formidable book in my library which contains an elaborate treatise on Divine love. It is wonderfully clever. It soars through all the heights of metaphysics, and dives through all the deeps of mysticism; but though you are pursuing Divine love all the way you seem to lose it more and more in thick clouds of

[1] J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, iii. 328.

words, and at last give it up in despair. It is a wonderful relief then to come upon such words as these (you have not to wear the brain to tatters in comprehending them): "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God." God's greatness we cannot grasp, God's wisdom is unsearchable, but God's love is something that any heart can hold and any mind picture. It is higher than the heavens and deeper than all seas, yet it is so homely and so human and so near that to realize it you have but to take some dear child of your own upon your knees, and express in tender kisses what you are to that child and what the child is to you.[1]

II.

The Design of the Father's Love.

1. God bestows His love in order that He may call us children. The Scriptures seem to run on two lines in their teaching about the Divine Fatherhood. In the Epistles it is always the followers of Christ who are called sons of God—sons and daughters of the Almighty—they only. But in the wider language of the Master the Fatherhood of God is as universal as humanity; every man, woman, and child received from those sacred lips his title-deed to a Divine sonship; every human mouth was commissioned to say "Our Father." The larger thought and the narrower thought are equally beautiful and equally true. We are all His children by right; there is something of His image in all. There are possibilities of large Divine growth in all, and there is a place for all in His almighty heart of love. But only they who know it and rejoice in it are children in actuality and possession. Only those to whom it is an inspiration, an incentive to obedience, a source of immeasurable hope, a furnace kindling love, are sons indeed. The rest are children in possibility, but outcasts in fact. They have a great inheritance, but they are ignorant of it or despise it. They walk through life as orphans, though a Father's love is ever stooping at their feet. It is only as we believe it that the wealth and dignity of it become ours. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God."

[1] J. G. Greenhough, *The Cross in Modern Life*, 64.

2. The purpose of the Father's love is not only to call us children but to make us morally and spiritually true children, to bring us into right relations with Himself. We might have been told that He is our Father by creation, and that He hates nothing that He has made; that He is "the Father of our spirits" especially, and would place a merciful limit to His contendings with us, lest the spirit should fail before Him. But we require something more than this. We desire a Father to look to, and love, and trust; a Father to run to in danger, and take counsel with in doubt, to listen to us when no other friend will, and to help us when no other friend can. We cannot bear to think that God should be indifferent to us, as if we were "the seed of the stranger"; but would fain feel that He loves us, as being His own children by adoption and grace. And, in Christ Jesus, we may feel this. We were made children by Him who taught us to call God Father. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Our spiritual pedigree is traced easily. Faith makes us Christ's; being Christ's, we are made sons; being sons, we become heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

¶ The words of the Apostle mean much more than that God is the Father of all men. Creation does not amount to parentage. All force and meaning would disappear from our text if we were to suppose that the power, the right, to become children of God, which is men's as the result of believing in Christ's name, was simply a re-statement of the doctrine of creation. We may use the fact that God has created us as the basis of our hope that men may become His children, but that does not identify creation with fatherhood. St. Paul said to the men of Athens, "In him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." But these statements are immeasurably below the truth. Paul held, in common with John and Peter, that believers in Christ are the children of the heavenly Father.[1]

¶ There is a Fatherhood of God, what the theologians call His creative Fatherhood, which includes all the race. There is still a higher, His redemptive Fatherhood, which includes all who come back home to the Father through Jesus. Man became a prodigal. He left his Father. He still remains a son creatively, but has cut himself off from the Father by sin. When he returns he becomes a son in a new higher sense also, a redeemed son.

[1] A. Mackennal, *The Eternal Son of God*, 36.

The Holy Spirit puts the child spirit into his heart, and he instinctively calls God Father again.[1]

¶ I know of no satisfactory account of the Divine Fatherhood. Dr. Candlish wrote a book on the subject which I read thirty years ago or more; it did not satisfy me at the time, but I think there were some good things in it. I have often preached about it and have a theory; but I do not remember that there is anything to indicate my position in what I have published. The main points seem to me to be these:—

(1) Our ideal relation to God is that of sons; this comes from our creation in Christ.

(2) Sonship involves community of life—life derived from life. But the life of God has essentially an ethical quality; it is a holy life.

(3) Ethical quality cannot be simply given; it must be freely appropriated. We were created to be sons; but to be sons really and in fact we must freely receive and realize in character the holiness of God.

(4) There is a potency of sonship in every man, and ideally every man is a son; but it is only as a man *becomes* like God that he actually *becomes* a son. This, in the case of all who know Christ, is effected initially by receiving Christ; when He is freely accepted as the Root and Lord of life the principle of sonship is in us.

This approaches the Divine Fatherhood from the human side; but I think that it is in this way that we can best approach it.[2]

¶ Some time ago a woman died in an institution on Blackwell's Island, who was found, afterwards, to have been a descendant of an English earl. Her birthright entitled her to a high position, but she had led a dissipated life and died a pauper's death. With a name and a nature which unite us to God, shall we live like homeless waifs and die like paupers?[3]

3. In calling us children, God confers a new status, a high privilege, upon us. His desire is not merely to bring us into a true spiritual relation and condition, but to give us new rank, dignity and honour. It is the rank given by God to the children of the new kingdom, and this kingdom was inaugurated by the coming of Jesus Christ. From that there follow two or three important facts. The first is that the saints of the old dispensa-

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 146.

[2] *The Life of R. W. Dale*, 654.

[3] J. I. Vance, *Tendency*, 213.

tion did not obtain this honour, this rank did not belong to them under the old era. This is a new title, a new dignity. They were servants, not children. Our Saviour marked the transition when He said to His disciples: "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends." A closer relationship had begun. A new honour had been achieved. This is one of those things that the Old Testament saints did not receive, so that "they without us should not be made perfect." The Scriptures also intimate that this rank, this status, is different from, and in some sense higher than, the status of the angels themselves. The relation of Jesus Christ to man is unique. "He laid hold not of angels, but of the seed of Abraham." When He became manifested, He became manifested as the Son of man. And so man has entered into a unique relationship to Jesus Christ, and through Him to God, a relation closer, more intimate, higher, than the relations sustained to God and His Son even by the angelic hosts themselves. Now it necessarily follows from this that the unbeliever has neither part nor lot in such a title, such a distinction, such an honour as is here involved.

¶ Corregio stood before a grand painting, enraptured; and as he gazed, grasping the sublime conception, amazed at the wondrous execution and colouring of the picture, he exclaimed, "Thank God! I, too, am a painter." So, when a Christian looks steadily at what it is to be children of our Father, with sublime thrills of joy he can say, "Thank God! I, too, am a child of the Lord God Almighty."[1]

4. Christ's Sonship is the true type of ours. No doubt the only-begotten Son occupies a unique place. He is by nature what we become by grace. But on that account we can look up to Him, and see in Him our true ideal. Not once does He call any one father but God, while He hardly ever calls God by any other name. Nothing is more impressive than the filial consciousness of Christ. It sounds so natural on His lips. Even as a boy, the very first words of His that have come vibrating down to us through the ages have this filial ring in them: "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" Men noticed that He was eaten up with zeal for His Father's house. It was His meat and drink to do His Father's will.

[1] G. C. Baldwin.

Every now and again we overhear an interchange of confidences and mutual understandings with His Father. Now it is a remark in a prayer, an aside: "I know that thou hearest me always"; or an "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Thus we might go on quoting word after word till the very cross is reached and He breathes His latest breath, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." What does it all say but this? The true filial spirit is one in which there is perfect understanding with God, from which all misgiving as to God's will and purpose is banished. For Him misgiving never existed. For us it was there begotten of our own misjudgment of God through listening to the lies of the tempter. But it has disappeared when we become sons with the assurance of His forgiveness and good will guaranteed by the Cross of Christ. Now the attitude of the soul to God should be that of unfaltering trust, and constant anxiety to perceive and anticipate God's will, gladly to accept it, and delightedly to fulfil it. It should be the reproduction of the example set in Jesus Christ, for, as Sabatier truly says, "Men are Christian exactly in proportion as the filial piety of Jesus is reproduced in them."

¶ All that we see in the Divine manhood of Jesus—such evident facts as the sense of the Father's affection, the constancy of fellowship with Him, the knowledge of Him which comes in spontaneous movements of the heart, and shows itself in simple loyalty and unerring reading of His will—is the revelation of what is meant when we too are called children of God. We are very far from the realization of this; we are only little children, very imperfectly acquainted as yet either with Him or with the possibilities of our own sonship; children learning very slowly, and with much waywardness and indifference, what are our privileges and His claims. But we are children of God, as the cry, Abba, Father! bears witness. We make the child's appeal to His tenderness; we feel the child's shame when we wrong His confidence. In our penitence we say, "I will arise and go to my Father"; our submission is the utterance, "Father, thy will be done." And our final hope is no other than conformity to the image of Christ: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him." Christ will be the first-born among many brethren.[1]

¶ For what good doth it to the Soul to know the Way to God,

[1] A. Mackennal, *The Eternal Son of God*, 36.

if it will not walk therein, but go on in a contrary Path? What good will it do the Soul to comfort itself with the Filiation of Christ, with His Passion and Death, and so flatter itself with the Hopes of getting the Patrimony thereby, if it will not enter into the Filial Birth, that it may be a true child, born out of the Spirit of Christ, out of His Suffering, Death, and Resurrection? Surely the Tickling and Flattering itself with Christ's Merits without the true innate Childship, is Falsehood and a Lie, whosoever he be that teacheth it.[1]

¶ Knowing as I do what the revelation of God means to me, knowing what God's Fatherhood and the presence of God's Spirit is to my own life, my whole heart goes out with infinite pity towards those whose lives are unblessed by what is to me the very pole-star of my existence. I cannot bear to think of some stumbling blindfold through the pitfalls of life while my hand is clasped by a never-failing Guide; or of others who look forward to the end of their earthly life with dread and trembling while I see only the outspread arms of the everlasting Father and the welcome of a life-long Friend.[2]

III.

The Recognition of the Father's Love.

1. "Such we are." The Apostle was not afraid to say "I know that I am a child of God." There are many very good people, whose tremulous, timorous lips have never ventured to say "I know." They will say, "Well, I hope," or sometimes, as if that were not uncertain enough, they will put in an adverb or two, and say "I humbly hope that I am." It is a far robuster kind of Christianity, a far truer one, and a humbler one, too, that throws all considerations of our own character and merits, and all the rest of that rubbish, clean behind us, and when God says "My son!" says "My Father"; and when God calls us His children, leaps up and gladly answers, "And we are!"

¶ Luther started from the necessity of a "comfortable assurance." Unconscious justification was not enough; a man must *know* whether he was being saved. And this assurance grace brought him, when it awakened his heart to faith; for anyone could tell whether he had faith or not.[3]

[1] Jacob Boehme.

[2] *Quintin Hogg*, 310.

[3] Viscount St. Cyres, *Pascal*, 247.

O heart! be thou patient!
Though here I am stationed
A season in durance,
The chain of the world I will cheerfully wear;
For, spanning my soul like a rainbow, I bear
With the yoke of my lowly
Condition, a holy
Assurance.[1]

2. How are we to awaken to our sense of sonship? "As many as *received* him, to them gave he power (the right) to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name." None of us know Christ until He reveals Himself to us in our association with Him; and as we commune with Him, and learn of Him, He becomes more and more to us. Accept Christ for what you feel He can be to you. Admit Him to your friendship; He will admit you to His.

¶ That day, if I had dared, I should not have set foot inside the chapel. I was out of humour, and certainly not the least inclined to endure the tedium of a sermon. To my great surprise M. Jaquet did not preach one, but began to read us a little tract. It was a sermon, but of a new kind: *Wheat or Chaff*, by Ryle [afterwards the well-known Bishop of Liverpool].

The title in itself struck me. "Wheat or chaff"—what does that mean? And at every fresh heading this question re-echoed more and more solemnly. I wanted to stop my ears, to go to sleep, to think about something else. In vain! When the reading was over and the question had sounded out for the last time, "Wheat or chaff, which art thou?" it seemed to me that a vast silence fell and the whole world waited for my answer. It was an awful moment. And this moment, a veritable hell, seemed to last for ever. At last a hymn came to the rescue of my misery. "Good," I said to myself, "that's over at last." But the arrow of the Lord had entered into my soul. Oh, how miserable I was! I ate nothing, could not sleep, and had no more mind to my studies. I was in despair. The more I struggled the more the darkness thickened. I sought light and comfort in the pages of God's Word. I found none. I saw and heard nothing but the thunders of Sinai. "*Your* sins: how can God ever forgive them? *Your* repentance and tears! You do not feel the burden of your sins: you are not struck down like St. Paul or like the Philippian jailer. Hypocrisy, hypocrisy!" insinuated the voice which pur-

[1] J. T. Trowbridge.

sued me. I had come to the end of all strength and courage. I saw myself, I felt myself *lost*—yes, *lost*, without the slightest ray of hope. My difficulty was, I wished I knew what it could be to *believe*. At last I understood that it was to accept salvation on God's conditions; that is to say, without any conditions whatever. I can truly say the scales fell from my eyes. And what scales! I could say, "Once I was blind, and now I see."

Never shall I forget the day, nay, the moment, when this ray of light flashed into the night of my anguish. "Believe," then, means to *accept*, and accept unreservedly. "As many as received him, to them gave he power—*the right*—to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name." It is plain, it is plain, it is positive. "O my God," I cried, in the depth of my heart, "*I believe*." . . . A peace, a joy unknown before, flooded my heart. I could have sung aloud with joy.[1]

[1] *Coillard of the Zambesi*, 19.

What We Are and What We Shall Be.

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What We Are and What We Shall Be.

Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is.—1 John iii. 2.

The Apostle has just said that all Christians are children of God. Here he adds that they are *now* His children. "Now," he says, in this life, with all our shortcomings, "we are children of God."

But the future of the believer is even more wonderful and glorious than his present. He is to be made "like" Christ, because he will "see him as he is." If the vision of Christ, even though His glory be only reflected as from "a mirror," transforms us now "into the same image" (2 Cor. iii. 18), what will be the effect of beholding the unveiled glory of the Lord? Here His Godhead is only partially revealed to His disciples; there the Godhead and the manhood—or rather the Godhead in the manhood—will be fully manifested, and, according to Christ's own prayer for His disciples, they will behold His glory (John xvii. 24); and the result of this beatific vision will be their complete transformation into the likeness of the Lord. In every part of their being, in body and in soul and in spirit, they will be "like him."

¶ As with a garden in winter, nothing we see in it tells us what it will be when the spring winds have loosened the frost, only we know that there is life beneath the snow, and that one day that life will show itself in leaves and blossoms and fruit. So with the believer. He will one day have a part in that glorious revealing of the sons of God for which creation is waiting. Meanwhile his spiritual life, like that of a plant safe all the winter in the root of it, is hid with Christ in God. More than this we cannot say of ourselves.[1]

[1] C. Watson, *First Epistle of John*, 149.

I.

The Seeds of Destiny.

1. We are children of God—His offspring, not His creatures merely. Ours is a Divine birthright, depraved, but not wholly obliterated; alienated, but not discrowned. Man still preserves his capability of regaining departed purity and felicity. What belongs to his character has been lost, what belongs to his constitution he retains. His character may change, but not the essence of his being. His enmity may die, his immortality never dies. His life is sacred, because he bears the image of God. Moral resemblance to God is the completion and crown of the filial relationship. It is the *relation* that gives the right; but where the relation has not been acknowledged and established, the right cannot be pleaded. The true child of God is born of God. He is a partaker of a Divine nature, and that nature quickens, brightens, perfects his own. He is "created anew in Christ Jesus." "Ye are all the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus." "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

2. All natural sons are not spiritual sons. The natural son becomes a spiritual son when the Father's will and purpose are made his will and purpose. We find this beautifully illustrated in the story of the Prodigal Son. The youth chafes under parental restraint, he is now a dissatisfied son; he leaves home and makes his abode in a far country, he is now an absent son; he spends his time and money in riotous living, he is now a sinful son; sin is always sooner or later followed by punishment, he becomes, therefore, a suffering son; grief and remorse follow suffering, as the morning follows the sunrise, he is now a sad and sorry son; sorrow turns into self-condemnation, he is now a humble son; he says, "I will arise and go to my father," he is now a penitent son; his father welcomes him home with outstretched arms, he is now a forgiven son; the fatted calf is killed, a ring is placed upon his finger, and a robe upon his shoulders, he is now a restored son; from henceforth he makes his father's will his will, his father's

pleasure, his pleasure, and he does all, not from duty, but from love; he is now, therefore, a spiritual son.

¶ In dealing with a man of fine moral character we are dealing with the highest achievement of the organic kingdom, but in dealing with a spiritual man we are dealing with the lowest form of life in the spiritual world. To contrast the two, therefore, and marvel that the one is apparently so little better than the other, is unscientific and unjust. The spiritual man is a mere unformed embryo, hidden as yet in his chrysalis-case, while the natural man has the breeding and evolution of ages represented in his character. But what are the possibilities of this spiritual organism? What is yet to emerge from the chrysalis-case? The natural character finds its limits within the organic sphere, but who is to define the limits of the spiritual? Even now it is very beautiful. Even as an embryo it contains some prophecy of its future glory, but the point to mark is that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."[1]

3. Though children of God by faith in Christ Jesus we are still imperfect, but we have in us the seeds of a great destiny. When we find fault with the child's lesson because he has not begun his sentence with a capital or ended his question with an interrogation mark, the mother excuses him by saying, "He is only a boy." Yes, but it is a great thing to be a boy, it carries the promise that some day he will be a man. The child who can as yet only stammer brokenly through a sentence, if in an educated home, or who can only blunder as yet through a sum in long division, if in a good school, has promise of one day speaking correctly and calculating the distance of the stars. Only a child, but it is a great thing to be even a child in such a home and in such a school.

¶ I have stood on a projecting spur of a mountain range and looked backward on the road I have climbed and then far down into the valley below where I could see the farm-fields and the river. As I have rested there for a moment, I have felt something of the joy which comes with the heights; but as I have turned to continue the climb, I have found the way blocked with blinding mists and the higher ranges wrapped about with the dense folds of cloud and completely shut from view. I knew the heights were there before me, but I could not see them. They did not appear. And so I had to plunge into the thickening mist and continue the

[1] Henry Drummond.

ascent without scenery. It is thus that John paints the second stage. The road winds through the mist. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," but the way is still upward and onward. We have not reached the summit, with adoption. Sonship is followed by development and growth. Here is the marvellous thing about the soul. It seems possessed of an infinite capacity. Man is ever becoming.[1]

¶ An acorn is an oak-tree now; but it is not made manifest what it will be. You may bring all your microscopes and all your chemic tests to the acorn, and you will not solve the question. Had you never seen aught but an acorn—and you have never seen aught but a child of God in this reference, and most of them very young children—had you never seen aught but an acorn, no imagination within your reach, or the reach of any poet God ever gave to earth, would have brought you anywhere near the truth. Again, go back, with the help of the scientist, in the long history of this physical world and universe, and he will tell you of some such thing they have seen as this: that this earth and all related to it was, in primeval times, a fire-mist. Before the stars, before the suns were here, was some such thing, as unlike this earth as a globe of fire-mist would be. It was the solar universe; but it was not made manifest what it would be. And great as is the difference between the primeval fire and the solar universe of to-day, unimaginable as is the progress from the protoplasm, undifferentiated, to the human form in its athletic beauty, indescribable as is the difference between the acorn and the oak-tree, those differences, peradventure, are small compared with the difference between what we now are and what we shall be. In the acorn is the oak-tree, in the protoplasm is the lily, in the fire-mist, so they say, was the earth; in you is the Christlikeness, folded more deeply, with more convolutions, than the finest folded bud. Deep within you is the Christlikeness that yet shall be part of the final manifestation of God's purpose and will.[2]

Lord, purge our eyes to see
Within the seed a tree,
  Within the glowing egg a bird,
    Within the shroud a butterfly.

Till taught by such, we see
Beyond all creatures Thee,
  And hearken for Thy tender word,
    And hear it, "Fear not: it is I."[3]

[1] J. I. Vance, *Tendency*, 214. [2] F. W. Lewis, *The Work of Christ*, 139.
[3] Christina G. Rossetti.

II.

The Transfiguration of Character.

1. Much concerning our destiny yet remains unrevealed. The Gospel is a light shining on the dark shore of eternity, like the lighthouse that gleams on a dark and stormy coast, to reveal the haven to the ocean-tossed mariner. It shines afar over the swelling flood, but only penetrating a darkness it was never intended to expel. It reveals to us almost nothing of the land to which we go, but only the way to reach it. It does nothing to answer the thousand questions which we would ask about that world, but it tells us how we may see it with our own eyes. It tells the mariner there *is* a haven there, and how he may reach it, and no more. It does not tell us all about the past, about our own mysterious being, or where in the wide range of the Divine dominions will be the sinless paradise of the redeemed; but it would guide us to God's holy hill and tabernacle, where in His light we may see light, and where what is now obscure may become as clear as noonday.

¶ There is a sublime reticence in Scripture. The man who was nearer than all others to the Source of eternal life is content to say, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be"! I think this is a typical silence—typical of the whole Bible. Men often say that the evidence of the Bible is the things it tells us. Doubtless that is one evidence. But I have often thought there is another—the things it does not tell us. The speech of the Bible may be golden, but its silence is at least silver. Many a book professing to bring tidings from God would have mistaken imaginings for realities, would have published the dreams of the heart as the very descriptions of heaven. The Bible commits no such mistake. Its reticence is sublime, as sublime as that of the starry sky. Enoch speaks not in his translation moment. Elijah speaks not in his chariot of fire. Lazarus speaks not in his hour of resurrection. The child of Jairus speaks not on her bed of revival. The youth of Nain speaks not from his arrested bier. Moses alone does speak from beyond the grave; but it is not of the things beyond; it is of the things "to be accomplished at Jerusalem."[1]

[1] G. Matheson, *Leaves for Quiet Hours*, 286.

I know not where that city lifts
Its jasper walls in air,
I know not where the glory beams,
So marvellously fair.

I cannot see the waving hands
Upon that farther shore;
I cannot hear the rapturous song
Of dear ones gone before:

But dimmed and blinded earthly eyes,
Washed clear by contrite tears,
Sometimes catch glimpses of the light
From the eternal years.

2. This we know—we shall be like Him. Jesus Christ was transfigured before His disciples. That was a glorious manifestation, and when the three privileged disciples who beheld His glory on the Mount were permitted to do so, when the period of enjoined silence had passed, they testified to that glory in glowing words. And here we are told by one of their number that Jesus Christ's disciples are to be transfigured, not now and here, but in the future life, at the termination of the present dispensation, at His appearing or coming. We are told that in that day they shall be like Him, like Him whose face when He was transfigured was like the sun, and whose raiment was white and glistering, and who will come forth in His second appearing in His own glory and in the glory of His Father and of the holy angels. In that day His disciples shall be glorified together with Him. Not all men, but His disciples, they who have received Him, who believe on His Name, and to whom He gives power to become the sons of God.

¶ Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, being killed in the battle of Lutzen, left only a daughter, Christina, six years of age. A general assembly, consisting of deputations from the nobles, the clergy, the burghers and the peasants of Sweden, was summoned to meet at Stockholm. Silence being proclaimed, the Chancellor rose. "We desire to know," said he, "whether the people of Sweden will take the daughter of our dead King Gustavus Adolphus to be their queen."

"Who is this daughter of Gustavus?" asked an old peasant. "We do not know her. Let her be shown to us."

Then Christina was brought into the hall and placed before the old peasant. He took Christina up in his arms and gazed earnestly into her face. He had known the great Gustavus well, and his heart was touched when he saw the likeness which the little girl bore to that heroic monarch. "Yes," cried he, with the tears gushing down his furrowed cheeks; "this is truly the daughter of our Gustavus! Here is her father's brow! Here is his piercing eye! She is his very picture! This child shall be our queen!"[1]

¶ I recall some years ago reading a sermon on this text by Dr. Lyman Abbott. All I can remember of that sermon now is a single thought in connexion with this passage. "Of all Scripture promises," said Dr. Abbott, "the one that stretches my faith most is this: to think that poor, sinful, fallen man can become like Christ—that we who are unholy, impure, selfish, can become, like Him, holy, pure, unselfish, is beyond human comprehension. The how of it I cannot fathom, the fact of it I accept as one of the blessed promises connected with Christ's coming."[2]

3. Now this likeness to Christ is graven upon the soul, not suddenly, but slowly through the years. This is not a photograph, taken in a moment by a flash of the sun. By the regeneration of the Holy Ghost the nature is renewed, and the man is started fairly upon his new and noble work; but the precision and detail of the likeness, like the finished picture of the artist, are the labour of thoughtful and toiling years. Through many failures, through hurricane blasts of passion, and frequent rain of tears, through baptisms fierce as of fire, and exhausting as of blood, through toil up new Calvaries, and the passing through strange agonies, which, in their measure and in far-off and reverent distance, may be called the soul's Gethsemanes—through all these must the believer press into that "mind which was in Christ Jesus"; and even at the close of an existence during which he has never lost sight of the purpose which came to him at the time of his conversion, he may feel that he has exhibited but an imperfect copy of his glorious Pattern.

¶ Of Dr. Thomas H. Skinner, Professor Henry B. Smith said: "His personal power was also enhanced, year by year, with the increase of his spiritual life; he became more and more a living

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *True Stories from History and Biography*, 281.
[2] A. Lewis, *Sermons Preached in England*, 176.

epistle, a gospel of God's grace, known and read of all men. Vexed and perplexing questions were merged in a higher life. Revealed facts took the place of disputed propositions. The living Christ took the place of the doctors of the schools and with advantage. Thus he lived and grew day by day, in his serene and hallowed old age, toward the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. He was called to be a saint and he was always fulfilling his calling, not counting himself to have attained, but ever pressing onward."[1]

III.

The Transforming Vision.

1. *The vision of Christ is to result in resemblance to Christ.*— There are peculiar elements and conditions in this vision which account for its marvellous energy. The visible objects of a spiritual world must owe their existence to the spiritual things of which they are the expression. Light in heaven will be caused by the action of the spiritual enlightenment of God's presence. The great white throne will be the effect of the manifestation to the inward sense of the commanding excellence of Divine righteousness. And so the vision of the glorious body of Christ will be the effect of the action upon the understanding and the spirit of His essential self-hood. Because He will exert His spiritual power upon us, and present Himself to the mind, therefore He will be visible in glorious form. If we may so express it, He will be outwardly seen, because He will be inwardly felt in the fulness of His glory.

¶ Material forces, as we call them, are all spiritual in origin. The causes of things are spiritual. Hidden behind all the wonderful mechanism of the world, and giving it being and activity, is the power of spirit. If we once grasp this doctrine, that spirit—itself necessarily and always invisible—creates and regulates outward things and forces, we shall be able to understand how the Coming of Jesus Christ, which will be pre-eminently a putting forth of spiritual power, will also exercise an influence on the bodily condition of those who are the ready subjects of His influence. St. Paul refers our bodily glorification to the Advent, when, writing to the Philippians, he says, "We wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion anew the body of our

[1] S. H. Virgin, *Spiritual Sanity*, 273.

humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able to subject all things unto himself." There is one working which is able to subject all things; and the term St. Paul uses for it, possibly with reference to its spirituality, means literally "*in-working.*"[1]

2. *Clear vision will ensure close likeness.*—We know that truth already in its early manifestations. We grow like that which we habitually contemplate, and especially so when we contemplate lovingly and enthusiastically. The affectionate child takes on the characteristics of the parent whom he loves. And the man who contemplates God, who sets Him always before his face, who looks upon Him as the supreme object of love, grows into the likeness of God; and such is the testimony of Jesus Himself, as He addresses the Father in that wonderful prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John: "This is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."

¶ A pleasant, sunny landscape has the power of transcribing its own joyous image into the heart of him who intelligently surveys it. The shadow of a cloud, it has been said, does not pass over the face of a field without making some change in it, and in the feelings of the observer. However this may be, it is certain that we cannot live without influencing others, and others influencing us. Human society is a vast network of reciprocal influences. Everybody acts and is acted upon in turn. Every man helps to mould and fashion the character and destiny of every other man within the sphere of his attraction. The thoughts of a man, spread over the pages of a book, have power to work an intellectual assimilation in the mind of him who carefully studies the pages. So must it be spiritually, only in a much higher degree.[2]

¶ Nathaniel Hawthorne has a story of a great stone face carved on the mountain side, which reproduced itself in the spectator. A young man who never wearied of gazing on that face had his life beautified by the vision, and one day as the people looked on his face, they said, "It is the same as on the mountain side."

¶ Jenny Lind told me, with all her own vivid, emphatic brilliancy of gesture and look, of a scene which had evidently

[1] R. Vaughan. [2] J. Davies, *The Kingdom without Observation*, 96.

left on her an indelible impression of wonder and glory. She had gone to look on the face of her friend, Mrs. Nassau Senior, after death. The son of her friend had shown her the stairs, and pointed out the door of the room where the body lay, and put the candle in her hand, and left her. She pushed open the door and entered alone; and there, before her, lay the face, fine and clear-cut, encompassed about with a mass of white flowers. On it was peace, and a smile, with the lips parted; but that was not all. I must tell the rest in her own words. "It was not her *own* look that was in her face. It was the look of another, the face of another, that had passed into hers. It was the shadow of Christ that had come upon her. She had seen Christ. And I put down my candle, and I said, 'Let me see this thing. Let me stop here always. Let me sit and look. Where are my children? Let them come and see. Here is a woman who has seen Christ.'" I can never forget the dramatic intensity of her manner as she told me all this, and how she at last had to drag herself away, as from a vision, and to stumble down the stairs again.[1]

What we, when face to face we see
The Father of our souls, shall be,
John tells us, doth not yet appear;
Ah, did he tell what we are here!

A mind for thoughts to pass into,
A heart for loves to travel through,
Five senses to detect things near,
Is this the whole that we are here?

Rules baffle instincts—instincts rules,
Wise men are bad—and good are fools,
Facts evil—wishes vain appear,
We cannot go, why are we here?

O may we for assurance sake,
Some arbitrary judgment take,
And wilfully pronounce it clear,
For this or that 'tis we are here?

Or is it right, and will it do,
To pace the sad confusion through,
And say:—It doth not yet appear,
What we shall be, what we are here.

[1] H. Scott Holland, *Personal Studies*, 26.

Ah yet, when all is thought and said,
The heart still overrules the head;
Still what we hope we must believe,
And what is given us receive;

Must still believe, for still we hope
That in a world of larger scope,
What here is faithfully begun
Will be completed, not undone.

My child, we still must think, when we
That ampler life together see,
Some true result will yet appear
Of what we are, together, here.[1]

3. *The clear vision is possible only to cleansed eyes.*—The Jews had looked for Him through many centuries, and when He came they did not know Him. When Christ parts the veil once more, and with the fulness of His being, as St. Paul says, apart from sin, is manifested, shall we know Him? Will He find faith on earth, the faith to receive Him? He will not be like what we to-day imagine. He will be as unlike some of our imaginations as He was when first He came. If you are thinking of Him as He parted from His disciples, He was not even then what you have sometimes thought Him. He was still scarred, and His brow was still riven with Calvary; and this is the last truth of this great word of St. John. We shall never see Him till we are like Him, simply because we cannot. You do not know your friend, you do not know your enemy, except in so far as you are like him. From your life there must go, not only impurity, but all leanings towards it; and in its place there must be that burning repugnance that was in Him when He declared "he hath nothing in me," when the advent of the Evil One was to Him unspeakable and unutterable pain because He was pure. And if we would learn the way of purity, it is the old way of sorrow and toil—the way He went. "I consecrate myself for their sakes, that they may be consecrated."

¶ How can a man, without clear vision in his heart first of all, have any clear vision in the head? It is impossible![2]

¶ The Civil War did not originate in a conspiracy, but in a

[1] Clough, *Poems*, 63. [2] Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 83.

perverted state of mind, as other great conflicts have originated in a perverted state of mind. No one attributes the operations of the "Holy Office," the Inquisition, to a conspiracy; or the seemingly endless wars of religious persecution, to a conspiracy; or the cruelties of the Spaniards in the New World, to a conspiracy. Conspiracy is too insignificant, too weak a word to cover the terrible meaning of such events. We must get nearer human nature than a conspiracy can bring us: we must get close to the undeveloped reason and the undeveloped conscience, and the incapacity to interpret the simple laws in the economy of nature. The blind are not only they who will not, but they who cannot see. And in the history of civilization it is they who cannot see that will not, rather than they who will not see because they cannot.[1]

¶ All shall see of Him just what they *can* see—what they are fit to find in that perfect, all-embracing, all-expressing face. Two men are charged with a crime, of which one is innocent, and knows that his innocence will be made plain, while the other is guilty, and has no hope of hiding his guilt. Think you they trace exactly the same expression on the face of their judge? The fears of one fix his eyes upon the firmness, the resolution, the searching sagacity of nostril and mouth and eye; and he trembles. The confidence of the other points him to the just, honourable, patient mien which gives him promise of a complete investigation; and he exults. Both watch the same face at the same moment, but what they find there is not the same.[2]

Life's journey almost past,
Tottering I stand at last
  Close to the door;
Weary the way hath been,
And often sad through sin,
  Now all is o'er.

The friends I walk'd beside
At noon and evening tide
  Went long ago,
And evening's travel, grown
Ever more chill and lone,
  Seem'd to pass slow.

Yet was it night, not day,
Thus slowly waned away—
  Now dawn is nigh;

[1] *The History of North America*, xv. 226.
[2] G. A. Chadwick, *Pilate's Gift*, 187.

The daystar's warning bright
Tells me the shades of night
  All soon will fly.

Beyond that welcome door
I know—and oh, for more
  Why should I care?
I shall my Saviour see
As now He seeth me;
  Jesus is there!

The Power of the Christian Hope.

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THE POWER OF THE CHRISTIAN HOPE.

And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as ne is pure.—1 John iii. 3.

1. ST. JOHN has been urging upon his poor, obscure brethren the fact that now, even in this life, with its infirmities, and weaknesses, and limitations, and sins, men are the children of God; that the very fact that God calls us children reveals the greatness of His love for us; that sonship here is a promise of glory hereafter; that that hereafter is to be lived with Christ, and in a state of likeness to Christ; that though we cannot form a definite conception of the greatness, and glory, and dignity of sonship in the Father's house, yet we may know that as He—the Christ—is, so shall we be:

Soul and body
Shall His glorious image bear.

This hope is a light that burns above the darkness of this world's troubled sea, and to it they may look as to the beacon light which directs them home. Beyond the sorrows, and persecutions, and wearinesses of life, they may look for their perfect consummation and bliss, of both body and soul, in the heavenly kingdom, in the Father's House, towards which they are all hastening. And then from the unimaginable splendours of this Beatific Vision he passes to the plainest practical talk:—If you entertain this hope, you must remember that there are conditions connected with it; to be Jesus Christ's there, you must be Jesus Christ's here; to attain to the fulness of His likeness in heaven, you must have here and now the elements of His character; sonship in heaven means sonship on earth; seeing God there means purity here. "Every man that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

2. So when in this chapter St. John has for an instant opened for us the door leading into the future home of the redeemed, he shuts it again, brings us back to earth once more, and says to us, as stated in the text, that the matter immediately before us is not what we are going to be there, but what we are going to be and do here, and that the only legitimate effect of the glimpse he has just given us into the celestial world will be to steady and encourage the steps that are to be taken by us in this world. "And every man that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." That preserves the continuity between the life there and the life here, but the use to which he puts that continuity is to enhance our interest in this world rather than to diminish that interest.

¶ This is the only time in John's Epistle that he speaks about hope. The good man, living so near Christ, finds that the present, with its "abiding in him," is enough for his heart. And though he was the Seer of the Apocalypse, he has scarcely a word to say about the future in this letter of his; and when he does, it is for a simple and intensely practical purpose, in order that he may enforce on us the teaching of labouring earnestly in purifying ourselves.[1]

I.

The Character of Christian Hope.

1. *The Christian has a hope peculiar to himself.*—It is the hope of being like Jesus Christ. "We shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." Now some would not put it in that way: they would say that their hope as Christians is to tread the golden streets, pass within the pearly gates, listen to the harpers harping with their harps, and, standing upon the sea of glass, be for ever free from toil and pain. But those are only the lower joys of heaven, except so far as they indicate spiritual bliss. The real truth, the truth that is contained in these metaphors and figures, and underlies them all, is that heaven is being like our Lord. While it will consist in our sharing in the Redeemer's power, the Redeemer's joy and the Redeemer's honour, yet, it will consist mainly in our being spiritually and morally like Him—being

[1] A. Maclaren.

purified as He is pure. And if we may become like Jesus Christ as to His character—pure and perfect—how can any other joy be denied us? If we shall have that, surely we shall have everything. This, then, is our hope—that we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

¶ One of the greatest fallacies under which men live is hoping for heaven when they themselves are out of sympathy with heaven. Heaven is not infrequently regarded as a place to which admission is gained by some lenient act of Divine amnesty, or by some special pleading of a mediator—human or Divine—or by some clever piece of juggling at the last moment. Instead of this the Bible tells us—if it tells us anything at all about that other life—that heaven is not a place into which we are admitted, but a life into which we must grow. Heaven is not location, or circumstantial environment: Heaven is character. What we are here determines whether we shall have heaven or hell in the life to come.

> Life, like a dome of many coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity.[1]

2. *This hope goes beyond the present life.*—It is far above man: it is set on God. In climbing towards it, he must leave all meaner things behind and beneath him. The hope of the Christian is the one worthy, enduring hope that is capable of lifting man above the earth and leading him to heaven. For all earthly and human ideals are too near the man to last him more than a little while. No sooner does he propose one such to himself, and begin to mount towards it, than it begins to lose its excellence as he draws nigh to it, and soon it has no power to hold his affections. There is no imaginable state that he cannot so disenchant except heaven, and no model that he cannot unidealize except the Son of God. Therefore every mere earthly hope is unworthy to rule a man and, if he have no higher, will at last degrade him; because man is greater than any earthly honour he can aspire to, and greater than the world that he lives in, and greater than all its achievements and glories—yes, greater than anything except God. *Sic itur ad astra:* This is the way to the stars. And Jesus, our elder brother, has gone before, and opened the way for aspiring man to follow. Behold they go to Him, out of every nation and

[1] W. J. Hocking.

every land, the leal, the loving, the true-hearted, even those who believe on His name. One by one they shake off all meaner desires, and lay all meaner purposes down, and as they climb towards Him along the various paths of suffering and of duty, their hearts are filled with a common hope—to be like Him, and see Him as He is.

¶ In a letter to Bishop King, Dr. Bright wrote: "Blessed are they that hope," is not formally among the Beatitudes; but it is, as you have made us feel, a summary of very much of the New Testament teaching.[1]

3. *This hope, being unworldly, does not appeal to mercenary instincts.*—It does not centre itself on surroundings like Mohammed's Paradise or the Elysian fields. Lower motives inevitably appeal more strongly to self-interest. People are often struck by seeing the indifference of Mohammedans in the face of death; soldiers have often testified how bravely they will go to death, and have argued that their religion must be more of a reality to them than ours. No doubt the lower, more mercenary conceptions of reward hereafter would make men more careless of their lives than the Christian one of being with Christ. The certainty that he was to pass into a sensual paradise would cause a sensual man, perhaps, even to put an end to himself. But one has yet to learn that there is really anything great in absolute indifference to death. Whatever the relative value of this life and the next, this is certain, that this life has a value, that in it man has a work to do, that it is wrong to try to shorten it, and that, therefore, indifference to its sudden close is no real sign of greatness. That is one thing; another is that, even granting that lower conceptions do produce greater indifference and consequent carelessness in the face of death than the higher ones, at any rate with the mass of mankind, yet we can never say, with the memory of Gordon and Havelock and a host of others before us, that the Christian conception, when realized, does not help men to die quite as bravely as any other conception, when there is any real and adequate reason.

¶ The hope of reward is a powerful agent, in fact the only effective one. Our Lord said so when He was among men. But

[1] *Edward King, Bishop of Lincoln*, 78.

neither Jesus nor the beloved disciple would have held out heaven as the object of men's desire without first revealing heaven to them. Jesus brought heaven down to men, in His own person. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He said, "I and the Father are one," and "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He showed to them in His daily companionship that every lovely deed and word He enforced was but an expression of His own nature. He told them He should leave them and go to the Father. He said that in that Father's house were many mansions; that He should go to prepare a place for them, and that where He was there they should be. Was there any fear, when He had taught these lessons, and inspired this spirit, that the disciples, who looked up to Him with adoring love, would think of heaven as a place of selfish luxury? According to their view of Him would be their view of heaven.[1]

I do not love thee, Lord, my part and lot,
For that bright heaven thou hast promised me;
I am not moved by fear because I see
A yawning hell for those who love thee not;
'Tis thou thyself dost move me; salt and hot
The tears flow down my cheeks to think on thee
Nailed to the cross and mocked, that men might be
Freed by thy death on that accursed spot.
Thy love hath moved me; and I see it clear
That, even robbed of heaven, I should love;
And freed of hell and torment, I should fear.
For, giving nothing, thou wert still as dear,
And had I naught to hope one day above,
No less to thee, O Lord, my soul must move.[2]

4. *If the future is not a hope it will be a fear.*—If we resolve to forego the hope, we shall still be haunted by the fear that in that sleep of death there will come *dreams*, and that these dreams may be of darkness rather than of light. The love of God and of His righteousness is the key to the appreciation of heaven. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived it, because it is spiritually discerned. We may speculate fancifully on its nature; we may cultivate curiosity till we bring ourselves, when on the brink of death, to say with the famous Frenchman,

[1] A. Ainger, *Sermons Preached in the Temple Church*, 16.
[2] Roy Temple House, in *S.S. Times*, Aug. 17, 1912.

"Now for the great secret"; but we have not been raised by such speculations any nearer to the height to which God is ever calling us. For He is calling us to hope, and to hope for Him.

¶ It would not, perhaps, be true to say that fearlessness is always the product of hope; it *is* true to say that, where hope is, fear cannot be. Hope, in the deepest, truest sense of the word, "casteth out fear, because fear hath torment." Bunyan, in his great classic, makes this clear to us, in his delineation of the man whom he names Hopeful. In the dungeon of Giant Despair, with his companion, Christian, it is the younger pilgrim who consoles and enheartens the older. And when the two enter together the last river, and Christian cries out, "I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head," Hopeful calmly replies, "Be of good cheer, my brother; I feel the bottom, and it is good."[1]

II.

The Operation of Christian Hope.

1. *The Christian hope has a purifying power.*—There are very few religions which have not made purifying of some kind a part of their duty. The very savage, when he enters (as he fancies) the presence of his God, will wash and adorn himself that he may be fit, poor creature, for meeting the paltry God which he has invented out of his own brain; and he is right as far as he goes. The Englishman, when he dresses himself in his best to go to church, obeys the same reasonable instinct. Whatsoever we respect and admire we shall also try to copy, if it be only for a time. If we are going into the presence of a wiser man than ourselves, we shall surely recollect and summon up what little wisdom or knowledge we may have; if into the presence of a holier person, we shall try to call up in ourselves those better and more serious thoughts which we so often forget, that we may be, even for a few minutes, fit for that good company. And if we go into the presence of a purer person than ourselves, we shall surely (unless we be base and brutal) call up our purest and noblest thoughts, and try to purify ourselves, even as they are pure. It is true what poets have said again and again, that there are women whose mere presence, whose mere look, drives all bad

[1] J. Flew, *Studies in Browning*, 126.

thoughts away—women before whom men dare no more speak, or act, or even think, basely, than they would dare before the angels of God.

¶ It has been truly said that children cannot be brought up among beautiful pictures, even among any beautiful sights and sounds, without the very expression of their faces becoming more beautiful, purer, gentler, nobler; so that in them are fulfilled the words of the great and holy Poet concerning the maiden brought up according to God, and the laws of God—

> And she shall lean her ear
> In many a secret place
> Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
> And beauty born of murmuring sound
> Shall pass into her face.

But if mere human beings can have this "personal influence," as it is called, over each others' characters, if even inanimate things, if they be beautiful, can have it—what must be the personal influence of our Lord Jesus Christ?[1]

¶ From Bethel "Jacob went on his journey" (Gen. xxix. 1). He "lifted up his feet," as the livelier Hebrew has it. He went forward with a new buoyancy in his step and a higher courage in his heart. He was animated by the hope which always thrills the soul when it is fresh from real communion with God. There are spiritual experiences after which "we become physically nimble and lightsome; we tread on air; life is no longer irksome, and we think it will never be so." It is a rapture to face the unknown future, if God has promised to be with us and guide us. As the Hebrew prophet says: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."[2]

2. *This hope will materially weaken our hold on this world.*—What is wealth, when we have illimitable riches laid up in heaven? What are pleasures, when we have before us endless joys—the most pure and intelligent that the wisdom and resources of God can create? What are earthly attachments, when compared with the society of saints and angels, and, above all, the Lord Himself, which awaits the child of God? What is knowledge—even the profoundest that earth's sages can fathom—compared

[1] C. Kingsley, *All Saints' Day*, 24.
[2] J. Strachan, *Hebrew Ideals*, ii. 49.

with that ocean of all that is knowable in the near future? While it is certainly a gain to have a cupful of knowledge instead of a thimbleful, yet, in either case, it is a mere nothing in comparison with knowing fully, even as we have been known fully.

Clearly, then, just in proportion to our having such bright hopes lighting up the gloomy recesses of our earthly lives shall we be able to sit loosely to the things of only passing interest, and set our affections on heavenly things. We shall use earth's mammon only as a handmaid to add lustre to the "everlasting habitations."

¶ We cling too much to this world's affairs. Many of us are like the little boy of whom Mr. McNeill tells, who was one day playing with a vase, and who put his hand into it and could not withdraw it. The father failed to free his boy's hand, and was talking of breaking the vase. But he suggested another trial first. He told his boy to open his hand and hold his fingers straight out and then to pull his hand away. To his astonishment the little fellow said that he could not put his fingers out as his father had shown him, for if he did he would have to drop his penny. He had been holding on to a penny all the time.[1]

3. *This hope will supply courage and patience.*—There is nothing that makes a man so downhearted in his work of self-improvement as the constant and bitter experience that it seems to be all of no use; that he is making so little progress; that with immense pains, like a snail creeping up a wall, he gets up, perhaps an inch or two, and then all at once he drops down, and farther down than he was before he started. Slowly we manage some little, patient self-improvement; gradually, inch by inch and bit by bit, we may be growing better, and then there comes some gust and outburst of temptation; and the whole painfully reclaimed soil gets covered up by an avalanche of mud and stones, which we have to remove slowly, barrow-load by barrow-load. And then we feel that it is all of no use to strive, and we let circumstances shape us, and give up all thoughts of reformation. To such moods, then, there comes, like an angel from Heaven, that holy, blessed message, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Every inch that we make now

[1] J. Dinwoodie.

will tell then, and it is not all of no use. Set your heart to the work, it is a work that will be blessed and will prosper.

¶ I think this was the first year that I took a leading part in opposing the Adjournment for the Derby (which Tom Hughes had previously engineered) and was beaten by about three to one. This was one of the many "Forlorn Hopes" which I have lived to see successful—for I think the Derby adjournment is now virtually killed. In those days everyone laughed at the idea of stopping the scandal. Surely the words of Charles Greville (himself a Turfite) in his Journal indicate the true nature of racing—"Then the degrading nature of the occupation; mixing with the lowest of mankind and absorbed in the business for the sole purpose of getting money, the consciousness of a sort of degradation of intellect, the conviction of the deteriorating effect upon both the feelings and the understanding—all these things torment me, and often turn my pleasure to pain." How often in looking back on these forlorn hopes do I think of the lines—

> Though beaten back in many a fray,
> Yet freshening strength we borrow:
> And where the vanguard halts to-day
> The rear shall camp to-morrow.[1]

¶ Two serious defeats had within the week been inflicted upon the British forces in South Africa. Cronje, lurking behind his trenches and his barbed wire entanglements, barred Methuen's road to Kimberley, while in the northern part of Cape Colony Gatacre's wearied troops had been defeated and driven by a force which consisted largely of British subjects. But the public at home steeled their hearts and fixed their eyes steadily upon Natal. There was their senior General, and there the main body of their troops. As brigade after brigade and battery after battery touched at Cape Town, and were sent on instantly to Durban, it was evident that it was in this quarter that the supreme effort was to be made, and that there the light might at last break. In club, and dining-room, and railway car—wherever men met and talked—the same words might be heard: "Wait until Buller moves." The hopes of a great empire lay in the phrase.[2]

¶ It is neither blood nor rain that has made England, but hope —the thing all those dead men have desired. France was not France because she was made to be by the skulls of the Celts or by the sun of Gaul. France was France because she chose.[3]

[1] *Sir Wilfrid Lawson*, 107. [2] A. Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War*, 175.
[3] G. K. Chesterton, *George Bernard Shaw*.

¶ Westcott gave us hope, in an age which needed, above all things, to be saved from hopelessness. "We can keep hope fresh," so he cried to us of the Christian Social Union.

> Hope, the paramount duty which Heaven lays,
> For its own honour, on man's suffering heart.

This is the debt that we owe to him—to cling to the high hopes with which he was inspired—even though we "see not our token, and there is no prophet more; no, not one among us who understandeth any more."[1]

> We are of those who tremble at Thy word;
> Who faltering walk in darkness toward our close
> Of mortal life, by terrors curbed and spurred:
> We are of those.
>
> We journey to that land which no man knows
> Who any more can make his voice be heard
> Above the clamour of our wants and woes.
>
> Not ours the hearts Thy loftiest love hath stirred,
> Not such as we Thy lily and Thy rose:—
> Yet, Hope of those who hope with hope deferred,
> We are of those.[2]

III.

The Pattern of Purity.

1. *Christ is the Pattern*—"as he is pure."—He exhibits perfection in the inner and outer life. The inner life consists in oneness with Christ, the outer life in intercourse with our fellowmen. The two are well combined in those words of St. Peter: "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" This holiness of character has its root in its close companionship with Christ, and is exhibited in all manner of Christian conversation. Look at the Pattern. His holiness was pre-eminently practical. Look at His submission to His mother when He was "subject unto her," His care for her in His dying hour, His compassion for the multitude, His love for His chosen flock, His faithfulness to those whom He loved, His meek-

[1] H. Scott Holland, *Personal Studies*, 138.
[2] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 196.

ness and gentleness, His sinless purity, His forgiveness of wrong, His delight in the Father's will, His absolute submission to the Father's purpose, His marvellous self-sacrifice, giving Himself "a ransom for many."

¶ In the Standard Office of the British Government there is a bronze bar, a yard long, the unit of measurement throughout the British Empire. Everything is measured by reference to that bit of metal. It is the final court of appeal in the matter of measurement. The interesting thing about it is that it is reputed to be the same length as the arm of the king in whose reign it was made. So that we really measure by reference to a royal arm. It is in the realm of heart and soul as in the realm of the market-place: our unit of measurement is something about a King —not the sweep of His arm, but the heart and the life of Him.

¶ In white all the colours are blended. A perfectly white substance combines all the colours of the rainbow merged in true proportion; but green or indigo, or red are only the reflections of a part of the solar rays. So John, Peter, Paul—these are parts of the light of heaven; these are differing colours, and there is a beauty in each one of them. But if you want to get the whole you must get to Christ the perfect Lord, for all the light is in Him. In Him is not the red or the blue, but in Him is light, the true light, the whole of it. You are sure to get a lop-sided character if any man shall be the copy after which you write. If we copy Christ we shall attain a perfect manhood through the power of His Spirit.[1]

2. *The Pattern is an everlasting challenge to us.*—The promise of likeness to God does not mean perfect freedom from sin now, far from it; but it does mean progressive growth, gradual conquest, ever, in some small way, coming to know God and His purposes better, and so growing, even if it be in ways almost undiscernible, to a likeness of something in Him. Every man that hath this hope in Christ, every one, that is, who realizes the blessing of His Baptism, the dignity of his being God's child, this manner of love whereby he, all unworthy, is called the son of God, and sees that this is but the beginning; that God means to lead him onwards to the full knowledge of Himself, till, at last, he is counted worthy to see His face—every man to whom these thoughts and hopes are real will long to use every means given of God for his cleansing, will suffer no lower ideal to overshadow and obscure his hope.

[1] C. H. Spurgeon, *Grace Triumphant*, 215.

¶ In the beautiful legends which tell us of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, one knight is described as the bright and consummate flower of chivalry, the brave and spotless Sir Galahad—whose good blade carved the casques of men, whose tough lance thrusted sure, whose strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure. It was no fond tale, no idle fancy; for many Sir Galahads have lived since Christ came to show men how to be great; and such are the men who have done all the fairest and gentlest deeds of human history. And sordid and commonplace as the world seems to have grown, the only real leaders of men are the men who, like Sir Galahad, are high-minded and pure-hearted. The time was when such rode forth in armour to resist the spoilers, and keep the far frontiers of Christendom against the heathen invader. Now, however, they do the less conspicuous but not less glorious part. In every Christian community there are pure-hearted Christian men who are the real champions of right, the warders of all that men cherish and hold dear—men who are kept stainless and pure by the high hope of their Christian calling; men whose high-mindedness gives tone to our society, who are the real defenders of public safety and domestic peace. These are the true defenders of our country, the unconscious champions of its homes—men to whose star-eyed vision the Christian's hope has risen, and whom by God's grace it has purified and is keeping pure.[1]

3. *How then is our purification to be effected?*—The answer is, and must be, that it is the work of the Spirit. But as, on the one hand, there would be nothing so vain as to try to do the Spirit's work for ourselves, so, on the other hand, there is nothing so useless as to expect the Spirit to do our work. There is a purification which God alone can effect for us. There is another purification which God cannot and will not do. Sin is forgiven, sinfulness is removed, grace is bestowed by God. None of these things can be obtained by man. But grace must be *used* by man like all other gifts of God. He must learn to be obedient, he must learn to avoid sin, he must learn to be active in goodness, by the use of grace; not by merely standing still as if he were asleep or dead. Whatever may be the source of his activity, he must, so far as he knows, choose, determine, plan, persevere in the way of holiness, as much as in the way of learning, in the way of working, counselling, or pursuing any other energy which God

[1] S. S. Harris, *The Dignity of Man*, 229.

has set before men. And it is plain that unless it were so we should not enjoy the human freedom, the human faculties in that thing which most belongs to humanity—the knowledge and love of God.

¶ See how he does not take away freewill in that he saith, "purify himself." Who purifieth us but God? Yea; but God doth not purify thee if thou be unwilling. Therefore, in that thou joinest thy will to God, in that thou purifiest thyself, thou purifiest thyself not by thyself, but by Him who cometh to inhabit thee.[1]

¶ To have communion with Jesus Christ is like bringing an atmosphere round about us in which all evil will die. If you take a fish out of water and bring it up into the upper air, it writhes and gasps, and is dead presently; and our evil tendencies and sins, drawn up out of the muddy depths in which they live, and brought up into that pure atmosphere of communion with Jesus Christ, are sure to shrivel and to die, and to disappear. We kill all evil by fellowship with the Master. His presence in our lives, by our communion with Him, is like the watchfire that the traveller lights at night—it keeps all the wild beasts of prey away from the fold.[2]

¶ I saw a smith the other day cleaning his grimy workshop. Through one high and narrow window streamed a golden ray of sunshine, and where the beam fell the broom swept. But under benches and dark corners one caught a suggestion of cobwebs and long-gathered dust on them. The smith took a piece of burnished tin, and catching on its face the ray of sunshine, he flashed it into the hiding-places of ancient dirt and disorder, and straightway followed the cleansing. It is a homely parable. Every man with "this hope set on him purifieth himself"; will send its flashlight into the dark places of the heart where hidden foulness still lurks, and by its revealing straightway set about self-cleansing. The vision splendid is greatly practical. You can do so many things by it. You can harness a stubborn temper with it, bridle an ill tongue, cauterize with the fire of it a hidden plague spot, yoke it to a sluggard self so slow to seek another's good at any cost of comfort. "Every man that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself."[3]

Then life is—to wake, not sleep,
  Rise and not rest, but press
From earth's level, where blindly creep
  Things perfected, more or less,
To the heaven's height, far and steep,

[1] Augustine. [2] A. Maclaren. [3] T. Yates.

Where, amid what strifes and storms
  May wait the adventurous quest,
Power is Love—transports, transforms
  Who aspired from worst to best,
Sought the soul's world, spurned the worms!

I have faith such end shall be:
  From the first, Power was—I knew.
Life has made clear to me
  That, strive but for closer view,
Love were as plain to see.

When see? When there dawns a day,
  If not on the homely earth,
Then yonder, worlds away,
  Where the strange and new have birth,
And Power comes full in play.[1]

[1] Browning.

The Bond of Brotherhood.

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THE BOND OF BROTHERHOOD.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God.—1 John iv. 7.

1. THE religion of the New Testament differs from all others in this: it affects and appeals to and governs the heart. Other systems have laid hold upon other powers of our nature, but the Gospel is distinctive in constraining the affections, in seizing the motive and controlling forces of the soul, and in bringing them into subjection to its loving claims. It is true, indeed, that the Divine revelation is not neglectful of any part of our being. Though it appeals to reason, enlightened and instructed by truth, it often addresses the imagination, bringing up before it the most lively images of good and evil, of blessing and cursing for time and eternity. Not infrequently it addresses itself to the sentiment of fear on the one hand, and of hope on the other, portraying the hour of death with its solemn realities, depicting judgment with its dread scenes, and unveiling heaven and hell with the objects which should awaken desire and aversion in every human soul. But all this is done only as a means to an end; it is to move the heart, to draw the soul away from things of sense and sin, to introduce it into the love and fellowship of God, and to produce in it that holy sympathy with the Divine nature which shall cause it to dwell in love as it dwells in God.

2. Of this love there could be no more illustrious example than was St. John himself. It was undoubtedly the loving nature of St. John that drew towards him the sympathetic affection of Jesus Christ. Between the two there existed a harmony of character, which bound them necessarily to each other. In both there was the humility and calmness of that highest kind of love

which is as far removed from the vehemence of passion as it is elevated above the changes inherent in passionate affection.

¶ These is a tradition that, when St. John was too old to walk, he used to be carried by his friends to the Christian Assembly in Ephesus. Then followed a hush among those who were present. The Apostle who had leaned on the breast of Jesus, the Apostle who had been with Him through His ministry, who knew more of His mind than others, was about to speak to them, and when he did speak it seemed that time after time the only word which he uttered to them was, "Beloved, let us love one another": "Little children, love one another." [1]

I.

Love in its Origin.

Henry Drummond has described love as the greatest thing in the world. But in that definition he has set forth only half the truth, because love is the greatest power in the heavens above as well as in the earth beneath, Almighty God Himself being Love perfect, infinite and eternal. Heaven is the fulness of joy unspeakable, not on account of streets of gold, and gates of pearl, and walls of sapphire, but because it is the presence and home of Divine love. Angels are angels because therein they have absorbed and radiate everlastingly the rays of this Divine light of love. Men and women are angelic so far as they have received and reflect this sublime grace. The earth is like to heaven in proportion to the love that is in it.

1. *God is love.*—This is the first fact in the universe—first in time, and first in significance. Man cannot be the only or the highest thing that loves in this vast universe. There is—there must be—in it some great, deep heart of sympathy, the infinite counterpart of our faint and feeble human love; for we could not be so moved and awed by unreality and deadness; and till we feel this—till we feel that the holy tenderness which comes over us at the sight of boundless oceans or setting suns or starry skies, that the strong sympathies which seize us when we think of human sufferings and wrongs, and will not let us rest till we have

[1] Archbishop W. Alexander.

done our utmost to relieve and redress them, cannot be explained by any curious network of nerves and fibres, by any laws of chemistry or mechanics, but is a living breath from the Omnipresent Love, working unseen but ever active beneath the material veil of things — we do not truly believe; the cold inference of reason is not yet quickened into a living faith; God is still a name rather than a power, a force than an agent, an operation than a person.

¶ There is a gem which is called the flystone gem. To the naked eye there is no peculiarity to differentiate it from other like gems; but place it under a microscope and you will see in the midst of its luminous brilliancy a tiny insect, perfect in all its proportions, even to the minute framework of its gauze-like wings and the network of facets on its tiny eyes. Diamond-enclosed, diamond-protected, it is a riddle in the book of Nature. How it came there no one knows, and no human skill could remove it. Whoso would touch that fly must first crush the wall of adamant around it. It is hid in the bosom of the gem, and the natural eye perceiveth it not, for it is microscopically discerned. The analogy fails, for it is dead, and we speak of life. But there is in man that which can call God Father, and which can never cease to be Divine, for it is similarly buried in the heart of the Omnipotent.[1]

¶ Love is the mightiest power in the heavens above or in the earth beneath, pure and overflowing at the heart of the universe. How marvellously it is akin to another most attractive force in Nature—gravitation. Remove this single binding influence, and worlds with all they contain instantly dissolve into chaos. Remove the single bond of spiritual love, and society melts into a social chaos. And just as the sun is the principal seat of gravitation, and the planets are the inferior seats of gravity, so God is the central source of love, and His angels and children are subordinate sources of love. Then, again, as gravitation is extended equally everywhere, so also the love of God. No matter to what depths of sin the heart of man has sunk, be it steeped in degradation and vice, or paralysed by carelessness and indifference, God's love is ever-present, able and ready to save. No man is beyond its reach and secret influence. Its force never fails or decreases. Love can never die: it is infinite and eternal as God Himself. And because He reigns and directs, and lovingly takes measures unceasingly for the betterment of His children, this world of His is daily and hourly progressing and improving. To-day the world is better than yesterday. To-morrow it will be better than

[1] B. Wilberforce, *Feeling after Him*, 130.

to-day. Let then our fixed resolve and maxim ever be: "God, Thou art love. I take my stand on that." "Love's faith in love is the surest anchor amid the waves of this troublesome world."[1]

When I found Him in my bosom,
Then I found Him everywhere,
In the bud and in the blossom,
In the earth and in the air.

And He spake to me with clearness
From the quiet stars that say,
As ye find Him in His nearness
Ye shall find Him far away.

2. *Love had its supreme manifestation in Christ.*—What sort of deity is Cupid, the pagan God of love? A mischievous boy, a winged and beautiful shape, a troubler of men's hearts, a fugitive and irresponsible visitor, who sets the nerves tingling with passion, but does not touch, and cannot touch, the moral nature. The God of love in Christianity is Christ, who went about doing good, and pleased not Himself, but gave His life a ransom for many. Compare these two visions, if comparison be possible, and mark how vast the difference. What wonder is it that love, as described by the ancients, is always a bitter heritage, a golden apple of passionate contention, and that its records are all of the ardour, the distress, and the unavailing sorrow of the individual? But the love which Christianity presents to us is something that forgets itself and is lost in a renunciation which is beatitude. It is not limited, personal, or egotistic; it overleaps all common human relationships, and finds higher relationships with all loving hearts. It comes with no purple wings, beating a delicate and perfumed air, and stirring the mere nerves of a man with passionate delight; it comes as a Divine power, which enters his heart and transforms it; it creates a brother in every man and a sister in every woman. It binds a golden girdle round the globe, and claims all those within it in the name of the love of God. It enters every avenue of human life, and sanctifies it. It is mercy when it meets the criminal, sympathy when it meets the fallen, compassion when it meets the suffering, labour when it meets the lost, renunciation when it meets the poor, sacrifice when

[1] D. S. Govett, in *The Church Family Newspaper*, Oct. 13, 1911, p. 764.

it meets the sinful, and it is in all a Divine power which men cannot help recognizing to be Divine. Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the love of God—love itself incarnated and embodied in the flesh—and those who would learn what love is must learn of Him.

¶ "I see," he said to me, "the revelation of God to man in the history of the world, and in the individual experience of each of us, in the progressive triumph of God, and the working of the law by which wrong works out its own destruction. I cannot resist the conviction that there is something more in the world than Nature. Nature is blind. Her law works without regard to individuals. She cares only for the type. To her, life and death are the same. Ceaselessly she works, pressing ever for the improvement of the type. If man should fail her, she will create some other being; but that she has failed with man I am loathe to admit, nor do I see any evidence of it. It would be good for us," he added thoughtfully, "if we were to take a lesson from Nature in this respect, and cease to be so wrapped up in individuals, to allow our interests to go out to the race. We should all attain more happiness, especially if we ceased to care so exclusively for the individual I. Happiness is usually a negative thing. Happiness is the absence of unhappiness."[1]

If love is not worth loving, then life is not worth living,
Nor aught is worth remembering but well forgot;
For store is not worth storing and gifts are not worth giving,
If love is not:

And idly cold is death-cold, and life-heat idly hot,
And vain is any offering and vainer our receiving,
And vanity of vanities is all our lot.

Better than life's heaving heart is death's heart unheaving,
Better than the opening leaves are the leaves that rot,
For there is nothing left worth achieving or retrieving,
If love is not.[2]

3. *The love of God in Christ to us is the motive of our love to one another.*—"We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." That is the assurance, that is the ground Jesus Christ has disclosed for the love of God.

[1] W. T. Stead, article on Meredith in *Review of Reviews*, March 1904.
[2] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 127.

Those who believe in the evidence of Divine love are tuned to the sufficient pitch, and the motive in them works sufficiently. If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another; we ought because we can; for God Himself in us, through that act of the loving Christ, enables us to do so. By trying to love one another we find ourselves putting out the energies lodged in us by God Himself; we are bringing into fuller use the force wherewith God has loved us. If we love one another God dwells in us, and we discover that it is His love that is perfected in us. Robert Browning has found in this theme the indisputable proof of the reality of the Gospel story. Our recognition of God as love, and of love as the final principle of life, which now seems to us so habitual, so familiar, has been created in us so easily solely by the force of Christ's recorded passion; that historic manifestation of God has endowed us with our present capacity for love and for belief in love.

¶ God's love is reflected in His children. The veriest beam of light passing through the vault of heaven and smiling in through your windows is exactly the same as the great surging ocean of light in the distant sun. Catch that slender beam, split it open on your prism, and it will tell you what the sun is made of. The difference between the beam and the sun is only one of *degree*. One drop of water on the palm of your hand has in it all the tides and motions of the sea; it is smaller, but the same.[1]

¶ There is an Eastern legend of a rose so sweet that even the earth which lies around its roots becomes permeated with fragrance and little bits of it are sold as amulets and worn by princes. You and I are but common clay, but if we will lie close to Jesus Christ, His sweetness will flow through our very lives and make them fragrant and precious for ever.[2]

Faces, loving faces,
  Lifting up their light,
With a thousand graces,
  Shining in the night;

Lighting up with glory
  All this darkened earth,
Telling us the story
  Of our heavenly birth.

[1] J. M. Gibbon, *The Gospel of Fatherhood*, 30.
[2] H. van Dyke, *The Open Door*, 121.

For, in holy faces,
Faces full of love,
We may find the traces
Of our God above.

So to all the races,
So to us and all,
By these loving faces
God to us doth call.[1]

4. *Love can be readily learned in Christ's school.*—The dullest scholar may be a very master of this art, and the most unlettered may read aright the signs and mysteries of love.

¶ It is related of an eminent singer that his teacher kept him day after day, and even month after month, practising the scales, in spite of the pupil's entreaties for something more advanced. At last the master told him to go forth as the best singer in Europe, having mastered the scales. Not otherwise did our Lord teach His first disciples. For three years He taught them "to love" by miracle and parable, by prayer and sermon. He grounded them in *love*. When seated with them at the last supper He said: "A *new* commandment I give unto you," and behold it was the old one: "That ye *love* one another." After His resurrection, He met the disciples on the beach, and He took the repentant Peter and put him through the scales: "Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest* thou me?" And then, having perfected them in love, He said: "Go ye into the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Having learned to love, their education was complete, their training ended. They could go everywhere and do all things.[2]

¶ Some one showed me the other day one of the advertisements of a professional athlete, in which it was stated that the average man keeps himself in inferior health because he uses only a small proportion of his lung capacity; there is an infinity of good air around him, but he is not breathing it. Moreover, he does not know how greatly he could enlarge the capacity he already possesses; the more air he can use the more fully he lives. I dare say this is quite true of our physical organization, and it is true of our spiritual organization too. The more fully we breathe the more fully we live. Inhale as deeply as you can of the infinitude of Divine love that is everywhere around and within you, inexhaustible, potent, free. Breathe it forth again in blessing

[1] R. H. Story, in *The Sunday Magazine*, 1881, p. 788.
[2] J. M. Gibbon, *The Gospel of Fatherhood*, 20.

upon the world. You cannot retain it for yourself; you must breathe it forth in order to live; everybody must; there is not a being on the face of God's earth who does not exhale something of eternal love in his relations with his fellows; the great difference between one person and another is the difference in spiritual lung capacity, so to speak.[1]

II.

Love in its Issues.

1. *Love is the chief of the Christian graces.*—It is the keystone of the arch which gives beauty and symmetry and permanency to the others. It is the crowning glory of the Christian character, the essential element of Christian perfectness, the highest exhibition of Christian excellence. It is opposed to envy, to jealousy, to pride, to haughtiness, to injustice, to evil thoughts, to wrong desires, to unkind and ungenerous words, to sharp and offensive acts. It thinks no evil. It wishes no harm. It does no wrong. It is not given to falsehood, to fault-finding, to suspicion. It is not apt to mark the infirmities of others; to dwell with pleasure upon their weaknesses, foibles, and sins; to give currency to statements which will be damaging to the good name or peace of its neighbours. It is not concerned to stir up strife, to intermeddle with other people's affairs, to disseminate injurious rumours, to promote dissension, to alienate friendship, or to create trouble. It is neither hasty nor vindictive; lustful nor grasping; litigious nor severe; but is kind, gentle, and peaceable; considerate of the good of others, forbearing to their faults, forgiving their injuries, casting the mantle of charity over their infirmities; it promotes their welfare, and does them all the good which it is in its power to render. Love heals divisions, softens asperities, removes alienations, promotes friendships, binds human hearts together in sweet and pleasant union, cherishes amiability and gentleness of temper, puts far away unholy feelings, and brings Christians to associate together as members of a common brotherhood—as a holy band, living and labouring for the glory of God.

¶ Far above all other motives was his love to Christ. That was the root of his life, and the life of all his effort. It was a

[1] R. J. Campbell, in *The Christian Commonwealth*, xxx. 533.

conscious, personal, realized devotion. It was too hallowed a feeling for him to speak much of. It coloured and pervaded every thought; was an unceasing presence with him; lay at the foundation of every endeavour, and was brought to bear on every action in life, on every book he read, and almost on every word he spoke.[1]

¶ Nature had done much for Coxe, but grace did more. The personal Religion of the man it was,—the lingering of the dew of the morning,—which kept him so fresh and green. Such a character would else have been spoiled by popularity. The humour would have degenerated into caustic wit, the courtesy, into mere worldliness, the sense of beauty, into æsthetic selfishness. The one only safeguard of a disposition exposed to so many and such various temptations was clearly the love of God. It was *this* which harmonized his character; preserved him from running into extremes; saved him from secularity; kept his faculties fresh and youthful. He really loved all God's works, because he loved their Author.[2]

2. *Love is the parent of many virtues.*—In the first place, love begets justice. Not only justice of deed but justice of thought—of which we all stand even more in need. When we love anyone we are sure to judge him more fairly, to make more sound and proper excuses for him and to give all the credit due to his better motives. And even when he has deserved just condemnation, true love will not shut its eyes to his fault or close the lips of just reproach. You cannot be just to anyone whom you dislike or hate, you cannot be just and true to anyone for whom your love is not pure and true, for it is not true love that is ever blind to real faults. True love then adds to justice the quality of mercy, not sparing in the condemnation of the sin, but tender, merciful, and forgiving to the sinner. Then we find love the faithful parent of patience, forbearance, humility, and meekness, all elements of the highest humanity and sources of unspeakable blessing and peace. When we truly love, we show all these virtues in their lustre.

How can one man, how can all men,
  How can we be like St. Paul,
Like St. John, or like St. Peter,
  Like the least of all
  Blessed Saints? for we are small.

[1] S. A. Brooke, *Life and Letters of the Rev. F. W. Robertson*, 164.
[2] J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, ii. 143.

Love can make us like St. Peter,
  Love can make us like St. Paul,
Love can make us like the blessed
  Bosom friend of all,
  Great St. John, though we are small.

Love which clings, and trusts, and worships,
  Love which rises from a fall,
Love which, prompting glad obedience,
  Labours most of all,
  Love makes great, the great and small.

3. *It is love that gives value and charm to all our actions.*—For the love spoken of here is not merely a sentiment. It is a pure and holy affection, a controlling principle of action, a consuming, abiding life. It would be a great mistake to regard Christian love as a passion, as a state or quality of heart unconnected with activity, as a mere negation of enmity or dislike. A large part of its force consists in its positive aspects, of the exhibition of active energy in outward conduct. Its full measure is realized only when, besides restraining us from its opposite vices, it impels and directs us into that course of conduct which is consistent with its high and imperious claims.

¶ "It seems to me," remarked Isabel, "that love is the leaven that leavens the whole lump. It is only when people begin to care for each other that the fineness of human nature is seen. I was horribly selfish myself till I really cared for somebody, and then I gradually became quite nice.

"As long as you don't love anybody much your character is like a garden in winter; one virtue is under a glass shade, and another is covered over with straw, and all of them are dreadfully pinched and sickly. Then love comes by, and it is summer; and your garden rejoices and blossoms like the rose, without your bothering about it at all."[1]

¶ It is hard now to represent adequately the extraordinary personal charm which so many of his contemporaries felt in John Henry Newman. The letters convey much of it, but not all. Yet the tradition of this charm is a fact which must be set down in his biography. It was a charm felt by intellectual minds and even sceptical minds, and by simple and practical men. Blanco White, Mark Pattison, Henry Wilberforce, Frederick Rogers,

[1] Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, *Isabel Carnaby*, ch. xxiv.

R. W. Church, and Ambrose St. John were all among his most intimate friends. The almost unique combination of tenderness, brilliancy, refinement, wide sympathy, and holiness doubtless went for much. He had none of the repellent qualities which sometimes make asceticism forbidding. He had an ample allowance of those human sympathies which are popularly contrasted with asceticism. Again, he seemed able to love each friend with a peculiarly close sympathy for his mind and character and thoughtfulness for the circumstances of his life. The present writer's father—never one of the most intimate of the circle which surrounded Newman at Oxford—used to say that his heart would beat as he heard Newman's step on the staircase. His keen humour, his winning sweetness, his occasional wilfulness, his resentments and angers, all showed him intensely alive, and his friends loved his very faults as one may love those of a fascinating woman; at the same time many of them revered him almost as a prophet. Only a year before his death, after nearly twenty years of misunderstandings and estrangement, W. G. Ward told the present biographer of a dream he had had—how he found himself at a dinner party next to a veiled lady, who charmed him more and more as they talked. At last he exclaimed, "I have never felt such charm in any conversation since I used to talk with John Henry Newman, at Oxford." "I am John Henry Newman," the lady replied, and raising her veil showed the well-known face.[1]

III.

Love in its Insight.

Is God knowable? No, answers the agnostic; God may exist, but we cannot know Him, for we cannot see Him, and knowledge is of the senses. Yes, answers the Apostle John; for the deepest knowledge is not of the senses, but of the heart; the deepest knowledge is through the operation of the affections, the choices, the will. We may choose, be affectioned toward, will, what is utterly impalpable to sense; and these things are more real than anything that can be perceived by the senses. By this organ, then, by the organ of love, a man may know God, whom the organs of sense can never find. The man with the retort and the microscope knows not God; but the man with a right heart,

[1] W. Ward, *The Life of Cardinal Newman*, ii. 348.

a loving heart, knows Him: "for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God."

¶ Love is the clue to the knowledge of God. Men grub and toil in dust and mud, they explore the depths of the ocean, and sweep the breadths of heaven: they analyse all things, and, baffled at last, they say: "Here is law; where is God? There *is* no God in the world." Now, is this wise? Is it thus we come to know *men*? God is not among the gases! Why seek ye the living among the dead? You cannot by searching find out God. "God is not any one of these things, nor the sum of all, nor the mere maker of all"—God is *love*, and he that loveth, to the extent that he loveth, *knoweth God*.

> The sun can mirror his glorious face
> In the dew-drop on the sod;
> And the humblest human heart reflect
> The light and love of God.[1]

¶ Standing the other day on the topmost ridge of Leith Hill, and looking where I had been told to look, through a small gap in the South Downs, more than thirty miles away, I could dimly perceive the shining sea. It was little more than a bright speck on the horizon, but I knew that if I made towards it that gap would open and let me through, and I could sail round the whole world upon the bosom of the deep represented by that shimmering patch of silver. It is not a perfect figure, but it does something to illustrate the mode or approach to perfect knowledge of God. Where love is, God stands revealed, small and restricted though our capacity for Him may be. But that shining spot is not a cloud, not a delusion; it is the real thing; follow it up and you shall see.[2]

¶ A child has very few notions in regard to his mother, expressible or inexpressible,—not nearly as many as he will have later on. The faculties whose business it is to manufacture ideas are not yet fairly at work in him. But he knows his mother a great deal better than any psychological expert from the university knows her or can know her unless he gets into some other relation toward her than that of an expert. Thinking goes round and never gets there; love makes a cross cut and arrives[3]

[1] J. M. Gibbon, *The Gospel of Fatherhood*, 27.

[2] R. J. Campbell, in *The Christian Commonwealth*, xxx. 533.

[3] C. H. Parkhurst, *The Sunny Side of Christianity*, 116.

God.

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God.

God is love.—1 John iv. 8.

1. It is significant that we have these words not from Jesus but from John. Jesus did not say in so many words, "God is love." He taught by the inductive method. He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." John looked at Him, leaned on His breast, stood beside His cross, gazed into His empty tomb, listened to His words when He had risen from the dead, and said "God is love." He knew, because he had seen Christ. This knowledge of Christ's character is the primary source of John's knowledge of God. He leaned on Jesus' bosom and learned His spirit, and in after years he thought of that spirit as a manifestation of the very life of God. Then he sought for a name for it, and there was no name good enough. He thought of Him who went about doing good; of His self-denial and poverty for man's sake; of His compassion on the multitude; of His sympathy for the bereaved; of His kindness towards the outcast; of His tears at the grave of Lazarus; of His message of forgiveness to the sin-stricken; of His words such as never man spake; of His washing His disciples' feet; of His death in pity for human sin; of His resurrection into immortality and glory, John thought of all this as setting forth the life of God in its fundamental meanings. He knew what spirit was in Jesus; he knew by what word to characterize His life. He knew that whatever of God's life was manifest through Jesus of Nazareth was eternally true of the Almighty Father, and he told it all in three sublime and immortal words, "God is love."

Here, then, we have three words which are three syllables, and they are greater words than all the piled words of the most elaborate dictionary ever constructed. These are the words out of which all the other words come. No man invented these

words. They have become so familiar now that we do not know their meaning; but if we could throw ourselves back mentally and spiritually to the right standpoint, we should know that it did not lie within the compass of human genius to invent any of these words. We take the words for granted; we speak the word "God" as if we knew all about it, and the great verb "is," as if it were one of a dozen verbs of equal merit; and "love," which the boldest lexicographer has never successfully defined, we roll glibly off our tongue. We have all things in three syllables. Here is the Bible reduced to the smallest possible verbal scale, and yet losing nothing of the stellar glory and the infinite compass of the evolution of the Divine idea.

¶ If I were asked what has most contributed to human progress and human happiness, even as philosophers measure those terms; what it is, more than any other element of knowledge, that has set free the intellect; more than any other principle of conduct, has instructed the conscience; more than any other object of desire, has elevated the affections; I should say unhesitatingly that it is the unveiling of the face of our Father which is in heaven; the revelation, all the more pregnant and influencing from the way in which it was made, that "God is love."[1]

¶ Bengel says: "This brief sentence gave John, even during the mere time he took to write it, more delight than the whole world can impart." And, indeed, one can well believe it; for, you must remember, John really and deeply cared about God; and if *we* really care about God and men, this text, if we believe it, will assuage our sorrow, lighten our hearts, and brighten our lives.

You are in perfect health, for instance, and you don't think about health. You cannot go into ecstasies over such a commonplace thing as health. But some day you go into a hospital—you see long ward after ward filled with sick folk—with pale cheeks, lustreless eyes, sad, anxious faces, young and old, men and women. The light is dim, and as you pass you see they are carrying one poor patient out of the common ward, and you know they are carrying him where he may die alone, without disturbing the others; and then, when you go out into the open air, and the light and shine of the sun, and feel the spring of health in your limbs, the simple thought that you are well thrills you! Health is no longer commonplace, and you thank God that you are not like other men, who are sick, and weak, and dying.

[1] J. Fraser, *University Sermons*, 288.

"God is love," I say.

"Of course!" you say. "How commonplace your sermon is! What a hackneyed text you have taken!"

But look here—look into all old creeds, where God is said to be Cruelty, and Lust, and Caprice. Look into Catholicism, where God is a Burning Anger, kept from destroying the world only by a continual sacrifice. Look into modern philosophy, where God is Force without heart, and Law without pity. Look at your own lives, at the records on the pages of memory, and think of the still fuller entries on the book of judgment. Think of your sins, yea even of your virtues, and as you reflect how bad your worst deeds were, and how poor your best, are you not glad for your own sakes that God is love?[1]

¶ When Mr. Moody built his tabernacle in Chicago, he was so anxious that every one that came there should learn one truth, namely, that "God is love," and so fearful that some day some preacher might stand in the pulpit and forget to tell the people that God is love, that he had these three words put into gas jets over the pulpit. So every night when the gas was lighted, there it blazed away over the preacher's head, "God is love." Whether the preacher told it to the people or not, they could see it for themselves in letters of fire.

One night the tabernacle was lighted but the people had not yet gathered for the evening service. A poor drunkard coming up the street saw the door a little ajar and saw the light, and then stumbled up the steps hoping to find warmth and cheer within. As he pushed the door a little wider, his attention was directed to the sentence in the letters of fire above the pulpit, "God is love." He turned away, pulled the door to, went down the steps and went up the street muttering, "It is not so. That is not true. God is not love. If God were love, He would love me, and God does not love a miserable wretch like me. It is not true." But all the time, the words were burning down into his soul, "God is love. God is love."

After a while he turned about and retraced his steps, entered the church again, and took a seat behind the stove over in the corner. The people gathered and Mr. Moody ascended the platform and began to preach. All the time that Mr. Moody preached, the man was weeping in the corner. Mr. Moody's quick eye caught sight of him, and at the close of the service he hurried to him and sat down beside him. "What are you crying about, my friend?" he said gently. "What was it in the sermon that touched you?" The man replied, "There was nothing in the

[1] J. M. Gibbon, *The Gospel of Fatherhood*, 11.

sermon that touched me. I did not hear a word of your sermon." "Well, what was it then that touched you?" asked Mr. Moody. "That sentence," pointing to the words in fire, "that sentence, 'God is love.'" Mr. Moody opened his Bible and showed the man from the Bible how God loved him, and how Jesus was an all-sufficient Saviour for all who take Him. The man listened and accepted Christ, and went away that night a saved man.[1]

Love came to me when I was young;
  He brought me songs, he brought me flowers;
Love wooed me lightly, trees among,
  And dallied under scented bowers;
And loud he carolled: "Love is King!"
For he was riotous as spring,
  And careless of the hours,—
    When I was young.

Love lingered near when I grew old;
  He brought me light from stars above;
And consolations manifold;
  He fluted to me like a dove;
And Love leaned out of Paradise,
And gently kissed my faded eyes,
  And whispered, "God is love,"—
    When I grew old.[2]

I.

Love in the Being of God.

1. *Love is the central emotion in God.*—When the Apostle tells us that God is love, he means to say, not that God has this attribute and no other, and not that He has this attribute paramount to others; for, as the attributes of any mind must partake of the character of the mind which exercises them, so the attributes of God must partake of the essence of God, and be in all aspects, therefore, infinite and Divine; none, therefore, can be more than infinite, none less than Divine. Each attribute—His truth, His power, His wisdom, and the like—must stand on the same footing as His love, and be equally great and glorious. But, by the expression "God is love," St. John evidently wishes to

[1] R. A. Torrey. [2] Francis H. Williams.

convey to us the idea that love is the great motive power of the Divine Being. Love is that which shapes and guides all His attributes; so that each is manifested under the working of love, and each directed to the securing of love.

¶ All God's attributes are inflections or phases of love. Love is not one of His attributes; it is all of them. His holiness is the wholeness of His love. His righteousness is the eternal conformity of His life to love. His justice is love looking out on the great mass of His creatures. His beneficence is love showing itself in deeds which we recognize as helpful. His pity is love toward the sorrowing. His mercy is love toward the sinful. But whether He be merciful or beneficent or just or righteous or holy, He is love.[1]

¶ The old Greeks, whose civilization developed along the line of architecture, and painting, and the decorative arts, said, "God is beauty." The Romans, led by the Cæsars on a hundred battle-fields to victory, until they boasted that the Roman eagles never turned backward, said, "God is strength." The Jew, inheriting from Moses, the great law-giver, said, "God is law." It was not until John had laid his head upon the Saviour's bosom and communed with Jesus Christ that any man was able to say with confident heart, "God is love."[2]

2. *Love implies fellowship.*—Love means an outpouring; it cannot exist without an object. Strictly, there cannot be self-love, for selfishness is the negation of love. It is no answer to say that the capacity to love was in God before by creation He found an object for His love. The capacity to love is not love; it does but accentuate the void. Is it conceivable that through an eternity the Infinite Perfection should have been yearning in unsatisfied longing for something to love? In the light of the Trinity, however, the difficulty vanishes. In the love of the Eternal which Jesus reveals to us there is the fulness of life, perfect fellowship, infinite and eternal love. Love is the very constitution and law of God's Being. God only exists as a three-fold relation of lover, beloved, and love—the Father for ever outpouring Himself in love to the Son; the Son for ever in complete self-surrender returning that love to the Father; the Spirit ceaselessly uniting Father and Son, Himself the Bond of love.

[1] Lyman Abbott. [2] L. A. Banks.

¶ The Love of the Trinity is nameless: human tongue has no words to express it; no creature may *inquisitively* look into its eternal depths. It is the great and impenetrable mystery. We listen to its music and adore it; but when its glory has passed through the soul the lips are still unable adequately to describe any of its features. God may loose the tongue so that it may shout and sing to the praise of eternal Love, but the intellect remains powerless.

Before God created heaven and earth with all their inhabitants, the Eternal Love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit shone with unseen splendour in the Divine Being. Love exists, not for the sake of the world, but for God's sake; and when the world came into existence, Love remained unchanged; and if every creature were to disappear, it would remain just as rich and glorious as ever. Love exists and works in the Eternal Being apart from the creature; and its radiation upon the creature is but a feeble reflection of its being.

Love is not God, but God is love; and He is sufficient to Himself to love absolutely and for ever. He has no need of the creature, and the exercise of His love did not begin with the creature whom He could love, but it flows and springs eternally in the Love-life of the Triune God. God is love; its perfection, Divine beauty, real dimensions, and holiness are not found in men, not even in the best of God's children, but scintillate only around the Throne of God.[1]

¶ There is a pretty story of St. Augustine. He had announced to his people that he would explain the doctrine of the Trinity next Lord's Day. In the week, as he walked by the shore pondering his discourse, he came upon a child at play. The lad had dug a hole in the sand, and was running backwards and forwards with his bucket, bringing water from the sea and pouring it into the hole which he had dug. "Why do you do that, my lad?" said the Saint. "I am trying to empty the sea." "Silly child," said St. Augustine, "you can never empty the sea with your little bucket." "As well may I try," said the child, "as you seek to explain with your finite mind the infinite Being of God."[2]

II.

Love in Creation.

Love has been active everywhere. Love built heaven. Love made earth. Love made hell; and its pains are the measure of

[1] A. Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, 515.

[2] C. Hepher, *The Revelation of Love*, 38.

God's love for goodness, its flames are love on fire. He "overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: *for his mercy endureth for ever.*" And by the kiss or the rod; by caress or correction; by "gentle gales from the wings of angels that fan His Mercy-seat," or by hot blasts from the burning marl of hell; by the blood of Christ, and pleading love, or by fire and brimstone of punitive love, God seeks to overthrow all evil in all men and beings, and will not rest until the Holy Spirit shall say of the New Creation, "It is finished": for "God is love."

1. *Love created the world.*—Why did God create the world for which He had no need? You might ask the same question as the builder cuts down the tree, the sculptor carves the marble, or the painter daubs the canvas. For answer to your question you must wait till you see the use made of the productions. You will then know the end and will be able to find the reason. The builder sees the mast of a ship in the growing tree, the painter a landscape on the canvas; in the marble cold the sculptor sees an angel's form. God saw the end before He began; and we can find the reason of His action only in the use He makes of His creation. The end will give the motive of His action. Nothing that is incidental will answer for His work. If new emotions fill His heart, as one by one His works are done, that is but incidental, and not the object of His toil. The work was not done to create the emotion; neither was the emotion solely on account of the work, but because of its adaptability to the far-off end. The unborn man was in His thought as day by day "God saw that it was good."

¶ There are many books in God's world, on every page of which is inscribed, "He is love." The beauty of the landscape, the wonderful provision for every creature's want, which meets them every moment, the happiness of family life, each man's own little history, the inner fountain of pleasant thoughts that plays in the bosom, the exquisite adjustment of providences, the tenderness and care of an Almighty Father, which we can trace everywhere, the patience of that Father's pity, our bright and happy homesteads, our full cups—they all teach it, but they teach it only to those who have learnt it first in a higher school.[1]

[1] James Vaughan.

God is love—the heavens tell it
Through their glorious orbs of light,
In that glad and golden language
Speaking to us, day and night,
Their great story,
God is love, and God is might!

And the teeming earth rejoices
In that message from above;
With ten thousand thousand voices,
Telling back from hill and grove,
Her glad story,
God is might, and God is love!

2. *Love is the bedrock of the moral universe.*—Science has told us of a struggle for existence in which the race is to the swift and the battle to the strong, and God gives the verdict to the stronger. History has told us that God is on the side that has the heaviest battalions. Political Economy has told us that the law of supply and demand is final in trade, and that an enlightened self-interest is the highest motive which commerce can know. Students of Nature, not a few, have called our attention to the truth that God sends not only the grateful warmth of the sun, but also the parching heat; not only the cooling shower, but also the tempest. But deeper students of Nature will not let us rest till we discern that storm and sunshine, calm and cloud are all manifestations of solar energy; that if one is good, the other cannot be fully bad. There is not, even if we deify natural forces, one God of sun, and another of wind, since sun and wind manifest the same power. To say that we live in a universe is to unify our conception of the underlying thought of creation, and more careful students of history and of science have a better word to say than that the world is a strife and a tangle. It cannot be wholly bad, and it cannot be mixed; it is then good, though sometimes our faith must stand on tiptoe to reach the truth—the world is good, and life is good, and "God is love."

¶ Is there not such a thing as the struggle for the existence of others? Did you ever start a quail from her nest, and follow her as she flew low and with only one wing, almost within your reach? Did you follow her till you were well away from the nest, and then see the helpless wing come into play, and the

mother bird fly cheerfully back to the nest? Some mother quails have lost their lives in that way, no doubt, but they have saved the nest. What has made the quail a persistent type? Strength? Yes. Ability to fly? Yes. Colour like the turf and dead grass? Yes. But these are not all. Your list of forces will not be complete till you include love, love that can imperil its life for love's sake. Did you ever see a little mother hen spread her feathers and give defensive battle to a hawk? Sometimes by the courage that love gives she actually drove the hawk away; sometimes she laid down her life for her brood; in either case it was love that saved the little ones. The love of the mother was stronger than the hunger of the hawk. So Nature gives eloquent witness to the power of the law of love.[1]

¶ When Mungo Park was in Africa, he felt at one time very weary and alone, and he thought he should perish. He lay down on the ground, and he saw a little bit of moss. Did you ever examine a little bit of moss? It is so beautiful. And Mungo Park saw this beautiful little bit of moss; and it said to him, "God is love"; and he was not afraid, for he saw even in the little bit of moss, "God is love."[2]

O plenteous grace that nerved my soul to raise
So fixt a look on the Eternal Light,
That I achieved the object of my gaze!
Within its depth I saw that by the chains
Of love, in one sole volume was confined
Whate'er the universal world contains;—
Substance, and accident—their properties,
Together in such wondrous manner joined,
One glimpse is all my utmost skill supplies.
Methinks I saw the universal mould
Of all this globe;—such thrilling ecstasy
Expands my heart, as I the sight unfold.[3]

III.

Love in Christ.

1. *It was in Christ that love reached its full manifestation.*—Christ was not the originator of love. He simply disclosed it to the world. You do not say that dawn makes the sun? Nor that the

[1] W. E. Barton. [2] James Vaughan.
[3] Dante, *Paradiso*, xxxiii. 58 (trans. by Wright).

incoming ships cause the flow of the tide? Nor that the flowers create the summer? No! The dawn is the sign that the sun is coming; it is caused by the sun. The ships are carried in by the tide, and only reveal its current. The summer makes the flowers, and they declare its glory. Why, then, do you say that Christ *made*, or *bought*, or in any way *procured* the love of God, when it was God's love that sent Him forth on His mission? The love of God has no shallows. It is equally deep everywhere—Calvary deep wherever you try it. As far as God's love is concerned, the Cross might be placed in Genesis as well as in John, in Leviticus as well as in Luke.

¶ Especially in Christ is there fathomless beauty and glory. St. Paul's heart was overwhelmed with loving enthusiasm as he thought of his privilege of preaching "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ." The more we ponder these riches, the richer will our own love be. And so it happened in the case of the poor native dying in the Mengo Medical Mission in Uganda. The Missionary asked him if he knew who Jesus Christ was, and he received the beautiful reply, "He is a strong bridge over which I pass through the gate."[1]

¶ Young Scott, the son of Dr. Scott of Greenock, is with us. He is a highly gifted man. May the mighty God bless him, and strengthen him for the work that he may be called to! He preached last night in Dundee. There was one thing which he said upon the universality of the love of God to sinners which I shall repeat to you. When God was manifested in Christ, in the man Christ Jesus, that man fulfilled the whole law, of which the second great division is, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. If there had been any single man upon earth whom He did not love as Himself, He would have been a breaker of the law. But He fulfilled the whole law, and loved every man, as He loved Himself—ay and more; and as He thus fulfilled the law, He said, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father"; that is to say, My love to men is the very image of My Father's love to them.[2]

2. *The love of God finds its free expression in Christ.*—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." His love had been given to men since the creation, but men shut their hearts and contracted their lives, and the love of God had no free course. When Christ came God was glorified in Him.

[1] J. A. Clapperton, *Culture of the Christian Heart*, 64.

[2] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen* (1800–1840), i. 143.

¶ Robert Browning has an exquisite little poem which he calls "One Word More." The idea of the poem is this. One of the greatest, perhaps *the* greatest Italian artist, who is already a painter, feels that there is more in him than painting can express, and from sheer necessity he takes to sculpture. Not that he gives up painting; but he adds sculpture to it, in order to relieve his own soul, that he might put into marble what he could not put on the canvas. Browning compares himself to that artist in addressing the wife whom he loved with such adoring self-abandonment. He had addressed her in verse, but what verse could express the love that was his? And he longs for some other art than poetry to tell the one word more that was in him. And so here. God had *served* man, created a perfect home for man—served his intellect, quickened it by the problems which He had set him to solve; but He still needed the "one word more" to tell all that was in Him. None of these things could tell His love—tell the depth of it; the *necessity* that man was to Him.[1]

Why comes this fragrance on the summer breeze,
The blended tribute of ten thousand flowers,
To me, a frequent wanderer 'mid the trees
That form these gay, though solitary bowers?
One answer is around, beneath, above;
The echo of the voice, that God is Love!

Why bursts such melody from tree and bush,
The overflowing of each songster's heart,
So filling mine, that it can scarcely hush
Awhile to listen, but would take its part?
'Tis but one song I hear where'er I rove,
Though countless be the notes, that God is Love!

Why leaps the streamlet down the mountain's side,
Hastening so swiftly to the vale beneath,
To cheer the shepherd's thirsty flock, or glide
Where the hot sun has left a faded wreath,
Or, rippling, aid the music of the grove?
Its own glad voice replies, that God is Love!

In starry heavens, at the midnight hour,
In ever-varying hues at morning's dawn,
In the fair bow athwart the falling shower,
In forest, river, lake, rock, hill, and lawn,
One truth is written: all conspire to prove,
What grace of old reveal'd, that God is Love!

[1] J. M. Jones, *The Cup of Cold Water*, 148.

Nor less this pulse of health, far glancing eye,
And heart so moved with beauty, perfume, song,
This spirit, soaring through a gorgeous sky,
Or diving ocean's coral caves among,
Fleeter than darting fish or startled dove;
All, all declare the same, that God is Love!

Is it a fallen world on which I gaze?
Am I as deeply fallen as the rest,
Yet joys partaking, past my utmost praise,
Instead of wandering forlorn, unblest?
It is as if an unseen spirit strove
To grave upon my heart, that God is Love!

Yet would'st thou see, my soul, this truth display'd
In characters which wondering angels read
And read, adoring; go, imploring aid
To gaze with faith, behold the Saviour bleed!
Thy God, in human form! O, what can prove,
If this suffice thee not, that God is Love?

Cling to His cross; and let thy ceaseless prayer
Be, that thy grasp may fail not! and, ere long,
Thou shalt ascend to that fair Temple, where
In strains ecstatic an innumerous throng
Of saints and seraphs, round the Throne above,
Proclaim for evermore, that God is Love![1]

3. *In Christ love stooped to infinite sacrifice.*—Nowhere else but on the Cross could it fully utter itself. In Christ the Divine love comes to us, and, mounting, towers far above any conception of love the world has ever known before. The friend dies for the foe, the pure for the impure, the Creator for the creature. Up and up it mounts, until the highest peak is reached that human life offers footing to. The Divine love plants itself upon the cruel cross, returning love for hatred, a prayer for a blow, a crown for a cross, and with bleeding body and breaking heart the God-Man gives Himself for us. If the cross of Jesus speaks at all it speaks in tones of love. In Genesis God works for His innocent child; in Christ He suffers for a guilty one. If the gift is love what can the giver be? No one but a God of love could send the loving Christ.

[1] Thomas Davis.

O Blessed well of love, O flower of Grace,
O glorious Morning-starre, O lampe of light,
Most lively image of Thy Father's Face,
Eternall King of glorie, Lord of might,
Meeke lambe of God before all worlds behight,
How can we Thee requite for all this good?
Or what can prize that Thy most precious blood?[1]

IV.

God's Love in Human Life.

1. *God's love is personal:* it is not mere compassion for the multitude; it is an infinite affection for the individual. The sun cannot shine upon the just, and not upon the unjust, for the sun is light, and it cannot help shining. God cannot love one and withhold His love from another, for God is love, and He cannot help loving. He loves us when we are good; and when we are bad He loves us still. He loves some with the love of pity, and others with the love of pride; He loves some with the love of compassion, and others with the love of complacency. But He loves us all, and will never cease from loving us, no matter how far we stray from Him. If some are lost, it is because they will become so estranged from good, so loveless, that God's love no longer affects them; but it will still be theirs, and will follow them even down to doom.

¶ God's love is like His sunlight, diffused throughout the heaven, catching the heights of the hills and crowning them with ruddy gold and clothing them in purple. So it seems to us an easy and a natural thing for God to love some people; outstanding men and women whose goodness might make them dear to Him. But this is not all that the sun does. It climbs higher that it may creep lower—down the hill-sides further and further, until it lifts the mists of the valley and covers the meadows with its glory, and kisses the daisy and fills its cup with gold and puts energy and strength into its very heart. God loves the good, the true, the pure, but His love rises higher that it may come down lower; and He loves *me—me.* I can wrap this love of His about me and claim it all as my own.[2]

¶ We are told of a painter who chose to remain unknown;

[1] Spenser.

[2] M. G. Pearse, *Short Talks for the Times*, 15.

the man of genius, the born painter, who refused to paint because men would not understand, would not properly appreciate his work. He shrank, as every sensitive man would shrink, from having his work bought by vulgar men, to be hung up in their galleries or on their dining-room walls, not because they cared for art, but because it was the fashionable thing to patronize art, and prove your wealth by the pictures with which you lined your walls. He shuddered at the thought. He would never degrade the genius that was in him by pandering to vulgar wealth. He would go on holding fellowship with his own soul's visions in the soul's private sanctuary; but he would not demean himself by selling his soul to the man who merely could pay the highest price for it. But that is not the noblest genius. Real genius *must* express itself, even for its own sake. May we not say that God *must* express Himself for His own sake? God has poured out the wealth of His redemption. We may reject it or receive it: God *must* give it. God must sing the song of His own heart. He wrote it in the lives of heroes; spoke it from the lips of prophets; told the wealth of it in the life and death of Jesus. He has been telling it unweariedly through the ages. Men have rejected it, scorned it, treated it with contempt. It matters not; to God to tell Himself was a necessity, for "God is love." [1]

2. *God's love is redemptive and persists in spite of our unworthiness.*—A man had fallen into a deep dark pit, and lay at its miry bottom, groaning and utterly unable to move. Confucius, passing by, approached the edge of the pit, and said, "Poor fellow, I am sorry for you; why were you such a fool as to get in there? If you ever get out do not get in again." The man said, "I cannot get out." That is Confucianism. A Buddhist priest next came by, and said, "Poor fellow, I am pained to see you down there. I think that if you could climb up two-thirds of the way or even half, I could reach you and lift you out." But the man was utterly helpless and unable to rise. That is Buddhism. Next the Saviour came by, and, hearing his cries, went to the brink of the pit, reached down and laid hold of the man, brought him up and said, "Go and sin no more." That is Christianity. God in Christ takes man from the horrible pit and the miry clay, and sets his feet upon the rock, and establishes his goings, and puts a song of praise into his mouth.

¶ There is a story of a lad who was devoted to his father, and

[1] J. M. Jones, *The Cup of Cold Water*, 162.

who stole some money from his employer's till. He was detected in the act, sent to prison, and brought a stain upon the family name. Before serving his sentence, he was allowed to see his sister, who came to visit him in gaol.

"What does mother say?" asked the lad.

"Mother washes her hands of you," was the reply.

"What do the others say?"

"They never mention your name."

And then came the question, "What does father say?"

And the answer was, "Father sends his love and a kiss."

This reached home as nothing else did. Is it not a parable of the All-Father's love? Man fell and went wrong; was—he always is—detected; brought a stain on the family name; and to man, just as he was ("while we were yet sinners"), came the message, "Father sends you His Love, and a Kiss." Jesus was the Love of the Father, and an old and beautiful name for the Holy Ghost was "the Kiss of God," the reconciling Power which brings pardon and peace to poor prodigal humanity.[1]

> Love, love that once for all did agonize,
> Shall conquer all things to itself! if late
> Or soon this fall, I ask not nor surmise,—
> And when my God is waiting I can wait![2]

3. *God's love is a wise love, a watchful love, a faithful love:* there is nothing it will not do for us, except wrong; there is nothing it will not endure for us, except sin; and there is nothing it will not be very careful to spare us, in order to turn us from the evil of our way. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." If we are chastened, therefore, it is not for His pleasure, but for our profit, "for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?" As the sun calls forth the very clouds that hide his face for a season till the tender rain falls that brightens the earth anew, so also His love, at times, may darken the face of heaven to us till the bitter-sweet tears of repentance restore the light to us again. But through all and in all His love abides unchanged, and is at the root of our sorrows as well as our joys, often hidden, but never absent, the same yesterday and to-day and forever.

¶ We see Jesus Christ, without losing His belief in God's love,

[1] E. E. Holmes, *The Days of the Week*, 45. [2] Dora Greenwell.

stripped of everything except being what He was and doing what He believed it His work to do. His character and His service, these were left to Him, and in His calling to these He recognized that God loved Him. Whatever came to Him, however painful it was, still did not contradict God's love, if it enabled Him to finish His work. Even His death was the cup which His Father gave Him to drink, and though it was bitter, it was yet a love-token. God's love to Jesus was more seen in giving Him that cup to drink, that so He might be the Saviour of men, than it would have been in snatching Him from the brink of death into heaven, His work all unfinished. We are taught by the life of Jesus Christ to see God's love not in the gifts of fortune, or in health and outward happiness, but in the supreme gift of making us sons of God, and giving us the work of sons to do.[1]

¶ I was standing not long ago by a child's sick-cot; and if there is any sight which it is hard to look upon, it is that of the little one, to whom it is all such a mystery, racked and tortured with pain. But the brave little heroine whispered, "Father, give me your hand"; and holding her father's hand, though riddled with pain, she never moaned. And so I. I do not know what others may not be able to do; I criticize no one, think hard thoughts of no one; I only say that in my bewilderments, sorrows, heartaches, struggles, I cannot rest upon ideas, visions, aspirations, strivings. I say, "Father, give me Thine hand." I can be patient and brave then. Father! Thy name is Love.[2]

4. *God's love is the key to the mystery of pain and sorrow.*—This epigrammatic sentence fits all graves, it fits all cemeteries; it is the word that is written on the portals of the churchyard, "God is love." I have seen a strong man reel over his son's grave as if he would plunge himself into it, for there was nothing worth living for after that one boy had gone. He was not in a mood to hear any preaching, he was not in a condition to hear even the gentlest tone; he must be watched, we must wait for him; he must feel it like a man before he answers it like a man. It will be no use speaking to him to-day; he sups sorrow; no, he does not sup it, he gulps it, he drains the cup of grief at one great gulp. We must call upon this man to-morrow; we must be remote, we must learn in God's grace how to touch a wound without hurting it. Next week perhaps we may meet him, and even then we

[1] P. J. Maclagan, *The Gospel View of Things*, 175.
[2] J. M. Jones, *The Cup of Cold Water*, 142.

must hold ourselves remote, and yet be near at hand, and when the lull comes, the only sentence the man can bear—and at first he may receive it with unbelief and partial scorn—is, "God is love." It does not seem like it. No, it does not. I feel inclined to deny it. I do not wonder; your grief is exceeding great; but—God is love. Who says so? I do. On what authority? My own experience; I have dug a grave as deep as you, and I thought just as you are thinking now; I said there are a thousand happy families, and one of the children might have been taken, but I had only one. That was a thousand strokes in one laceration, and I, brother in grief, fellow-mason in tears, I say, God-is-love.[1]

¶ I was at Doulton's wonderful art works the other day, and saw one superb specimen of art—an illustration of a dream of Dante's. I was admiring the figure of Beatrice—the exquisite workmanship, the pose and grace of the figure. "Ah," said the gentleman who was showing it to me, "that has to be *fired* three times yet; those colours must be made permanent."[2]

5. *God's love is a sufficient guarantee for the future.*—Our immortality is a necessity to God. Love cannot let us die. Man is God's child. Therefore God has set His heart upon him, and visited him every day. In the house of the rich man there are many treasures—rare books, costly pictures, splendid marbles, shining gems; but the little child who bears his image and likeness, and who looks up into his face with smiling love, and who answers to his affections with tender heart, is the dearest jewel of them all. And there is no man or woman who would not see the great house blotted out by fire, and every treasure absolutely destroyed rather than that harm should come to one hair of that golden head. In the great house of God there are many treasures and jewels—stars and planets, suns and moons; but above them all God values His human child.

The sole hope of man is God. The sole hope of retaining God is in the absoluteness and the universality of the Divine love. His righteousness must be the righteousness of love. His wrath must be the holy wrath of love. His retribution must be the recompense of love. They are all determined, limited, described, if God is love, by love. If God is an eternal being, and if God is

[1] J. Parker, *The City Temple Pulpit*, iii. 239.
[2] J. M. Jones, *The Cup of Cold Water*, 165.

love, then the love of God is nothing less than an eternal thing. If God is universal and in communication with every human soul, then, when you bring these things together, it yields the truth that the eternal love of God extends eternally to every saint and sinner of the human race. There is no other issue, if it is true that God is love. The love of the Eternal for every human soul is an eternally enduring love. Its universality in space and time means its eternal endurableness, not only for poor and rich, for white and black, but for every sinner as well as for every saint, for the child who is the prodigal in the far country as well as for the brother obedient in the home. The door of hope is never closed by the Father's hand.

> Yea God is love! and this I trust,
> Though summer is over and sweetness done,
> That all my lilies are safe, in the dust,
> As they were in the glow of the great, glad sun.
>
> Yea God is love, and love is might!
> Mighty as surely to keep as to make;
> And the sleepers, sleeping in death's dark night,
> In the resurrection of life shall wake.

¶ In Watts' picture entitled "Love Triumphant," Time and Death have companioned together throughout the ages; and they are at length overthrown and lie prostrate at the feet of Love. They appear as two vague figures wrapped in clouds; the man half recumbent, the woman lying prone on the ground; time in the form of the woman illumined with a bright light; death in the form of a man overshadowed by his own form, and knowing nothing of the secrets that are hidden in his stern keeping. Love appears as a mystic angel with hands outstretched and mighty wings lifted upwards, and a waving robe blown across his body by a strong wind, and clouds of glory round about him, mounting into the empyrean.[1]

¶ The manifestation of unselfish affection, or even the expression of it, is a token of a higher nature in man and a presage of immortality. Where there is a love stronger than death there must be a soul stronger also.[2]

[1] H. Macmillan, *G. F. Watts*, 258.
[2] John Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 7.

Love Casting Out Fear.

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Love Casting Out Fear.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love.—1 John iv. 18.

1. St. John's name does not call up before us the fiery zeal that stirs some to noble deeds, or the unfaltering faith that nerves others to meet danger, or the calm endurance that lifts others above pain and trial; though zeal, and resolution, and endurance are each and all so commonly the offspring and the evidence of love in the hearts of men. What St. John, for the most part, represents to our minds is love in its softer aspect. We often forget that he was Boanerges. We picture him to ourselves as the tenderest of men, and the most unselfish; at once the most ready to sympathize with and comfort others in distress and the most quickly responsive to affection shown by others for him. And so it is, not only with St. John, but with other characters also; we are apt to forget that other side, the necessary complement, of love—namely, *courage*, and *resolution*, and all that is akin to these. Often, when we see men soft and gentle, like St. John, we fail to remember that there must be a stronger side to their characters; just as, on the other hand, when we see men who are evidently cast in a sterner mould, we frequently forget that there may be—often, indeed, that there must be—warm springs of feeling within their hearts which we cannot see, to account for that strict or even rigid performance of duty which we can see.

2. But the love which he commends in this Epistle is not an emotion based upon mere feeling and impulse, or a passion having its roots and energy in the lower nature of man; it is a love entirely in subordination to principle, and sanctified by its hearty consecration to God. According to the Apostle, therefore,

Christian love is elevated into the very highest type of spiritual chivalry. It is emphatically an affection based upon a reasoning perception of worth in the object of its choice, and hence it is a moral power, and not an unintelligent emotion of instinct or habit. In the fulness of its strength it has power to call forth forms of spiritual beauty more thrilling than any manifestation of mere animal passion. In Christian life it is a profound reality, being the true secret of man's happiness and well-being.

Such is the love which the Apostle puts in opposition to fear. It is the "perfect love"—the love which is fostered with the truest sincerity, and from a purely unselfish motive—that has power to cast out fear. There is no fear in that great passion of the human soul which is called "the love of God"; for, on the contrary, it is instrumental in producing in the heart that beats and burns with it a blessing which surpasses all human anticipation. It is the prize and glory of the spiritual life, the master grace that enriches the fellowship of a soul with heaven. The modes of its action and the forms of its life are such as give it free and glorious course, and show, in proportion to its sincerity and intensity, how pre-eminently it is the conqueror of all fear.

¶ In heaven, love will absorb fear; but in this world, *fear and love must go together.* No one can love God aright without fearing Him; though many fear Him, and yet do not love Him. Self-confident men, who do not know their own hearts, or the reasons they have for being dissatisfied with themselves, do not fear God, and they think this bold freedom is to love Him. Deliberate sinners fear but cannot love Him. But devotion to Him consists in love and fear, as we may understand from our ordinary attachment to each other. No one really loves another, who does not feel a certain reverence towards him. When friends transgress this sobriety of affection, they may indeed continue associates for a time, but they have broken the bond of union. It is a mutual respect that makes friendship lasting. So again, in the feelings of inferiors towards superiors. Fear must go before love. Till he who has authority shows he has it and can use it, his forbearance will not be valued duly; his kindness will look like weakness. We learn to contemn what we do not fear; and we cannot love what we contemn. So in religion also. We cannot understand Christ's mercies till we understand His power, His glory, His unspeakable holiness, and our demerits; that is, until we first fear Him. Not that fear comes first, and then love; for the

most part they will proceed together. Fear is allayed by the love of Him, and our love is sobered by our fear of Him.[1]

3. The Apostle had just spoken of a day of judgment. To his mind there was something very real in that judgment, very decisive too. But the reality—the *force* of such reality—lay in this, that he did not project it into some *distant* future, else it would have lost much of its terribleness by such distance. He saw—and we, too, may see if we will—the judgment already set, and the books opened. There are days of our inner experience which are to us days of judgment, when we seem to stand at the bar of conscience, and meet face to face with God, who sits enthroned there. The secrets of our hearts are revealed to ourselves, and the searching eye of a Divine truth is set upon us. What strength or what boldness can we reach compared with that which comes from love? This appears to be the innermost thought of our writer. Love on the throne and in the heart gives fearlessness in every day of judgment. The soul finds shelter, not simply in its own affection, but in the Divine affection. It becomes a solace to us when most unfriended. Here is the perfection of Love, that it meets God with fearlessness. With all the dreadful things we may be able to trace in ourselves, and even at a time when most of all we feel we must be true to God, to be able to stand in the Eternal Light: this is the perfection of Love.

¶ The most perfect example of love is our Lord Jesus Christ. And the most complete example of a being whose ruling disposition and principle is *fear* and *hate*, is the devil. Here are the two models—and we are all growing more like to one or the other of them. We are all, as the years go on, growing more loving, more trustful, more kindly in disposition, more liberal in almsgiving; or we are growing more fearful and suspicious, more grudging and mechanical in our performance of duty, money-loving and miserly, ruling ourselves in our daily life, not by love, but by fear.[2]

¶ Mr. Robert E. Speer stopped from a British India steamer at Muscat to visit the Rev. Peter Zwemer, who was working there alone. Mr. Zwemer took his visitor up to his house, where, he said, his family were staying. There, sitting on benches about

[1] J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, i. 303.

[2] *Literary Churchman*, xxiv. 235.

the room, were eighteen little black boys. They had been rescued from a slave-ship that had been coming up the eastern coast of Arabia with those little fellows, to be sold on the date plantations along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The British consul had seized them from the traders, and Mr. Zwemer had undertaken to keep them until they were eighteen years old, when they would be given their manumission papers.

"When I got them," said Mr. Zwemer, "the whole eighteen huddled together in the middle of the floor, like jack-rabbits, and every time I came close, they huddled a little nearer. They mistrusted every one. On each little cheek-bone was the brand of the slave's iron, and for months and months they had known nothing but hatred and beatings, and had been shut down in the hold of the slaveship, in order that they might make no noise and betray their presence."

When Mr. Speer saw them they looked happy and confident, and they sang for him, "Jesus loves me, this I know," looking as if the realization that all their blessings had come from that Divine Source had already sunk deep into their hearts.

I.

The Inevitableness of Fear.

1. There are different meanings attached to this word *fear*, which we must take account of. Let us remember that in its highest sense it is reverence, and the love that does not reverence is a coarse earthly thing. Worship is one of the essential attributes of a true love. Heavenly love is always a reverence for the object loved. It lays its ample treasure at the feet of the beloved. But fear also suggests alarm, disquiet, suspicion. Perfect love does not know, cannot reckon upon, these. How does this description apply to the spiritual affection about which St. John writes? Let the heart love God, and it cannot dread Him. Let the heart love, and it will cling where it loves. You cannot cling without sympathy.

Our love to God is full of clinging confidence in Him and sympathy with all His purposes. But love has to take some things upon trust. It cannot always read the meaning when it trusts the purpose of the beloved. Still less does it suspect. You cannot call that a perfect love in any of the human relationships

which looks suspiciously, which is full of forebodings. Love trusts —trusts always.

¶ Augustine speaks of fear as the needle, sharp and painful, but bringing in the thread; the needle passes, and the pain is gone, and then comes the thread which forms the union and joins the soul to God. So fear may begin the blessing to the soul; love perfects it, and then—fear all gone—it rises to filial confidence.[1]

2. In a world where everything has to struggle for existence fear is inevitable. One of the strangest things in the organization of this world is the prevalence of a universal destructiveness. We are taught, and we believe, that God is a God of benevolence. We are taught, and we believe, that the world was ordained for the production of happiness. Yet, when the Apostle says that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," every one who is conversant with history agrees with him. Every one who looks out into life and takes cognizance of the things that are going on—the silent sufferings, the secret mischiefs, the wastes, and the wails that spread throughout the whole human family—must feel that some defence is needed to make life tolerable or even possible. Now fear is the best defence of all the passions that are committed to men. If the world were all peaceful, fear would be a torment; but on the supposition that the world is full of antagonisms and destroying influences, and that life is to be maintained and developed in spite of the difficulties and dangers which surround everything and everybody, fear is a preservation.

¶ Wherever there is evil to be seen, there is fear or the seed of fear; and evil is around us, and in us, on all sides, in this world of ours. Who can look around at the state of the world at any moment and not feel anxious at what we and our children may have to go through? Who has not things which he values as the apple of his eye, things to which he has always been accustomed —things which he believes to be bound up with all that is good and precious in life, things whose removal would make days for ever dark and unbearable—and yet does not see that they hang but on a thread; perhaps that what is to bring their ruin and overthrow has already begun to work? Who does not feel that change is the law and order of the world, and never more so than in our own days; and who does not feel that a change might easily

[1] J. B. Figgis, *The Anointing*, 76.

come—in his circumstances, in his friends, in the neighbours among whom he dwells—which would make things very wretched to him? Every one who thinks and looks forward to what may be in the world, and in the country where he lives, must sometimes feel fear and anxiety coming over him, taking possession of him, and distressing him. What may I not live to see? What may I not live to see overthrown or set up? What calamities such as I hear of on all sides may I not have to taste of? Who can tell? To-day for one, to-morrow for the other, is the rule of fortune. And when these thoughts come into the mind, of the judgments and trials of God's providence meeting us, we understand what is meant by the saying that "fear hath torment."[1]

3. Fear arises necessarily from our ignorance. A person altogether unacquainted with the operations of a machine, a steam-engine or the like, would fear to meddle with it, because it might do him injury in some way which he would have no reason to expect; an engineer by profession would have no such fear as this. What is the difference between the two? Clearly this, that one understands the action of the machine with which he has to do, and the other does not; the machine must be spoken of as dangerous or not dangerous, according to the training of the person concerned. So an honest man is in no fear of a judge, provided only that he knows the judge to be himself an honest man and a competent judge; if by any misfortune an innocent man were placed upon his trial, and he was well assured of the integrity and intelligence of his judge, he could not dread the result; but suppose that the judge, either from ignorance, or ill-temper, or party-spirit, or any other cause, were well known as a capricious man, one whose judgments could never be anticipated, because he would not be guided by the high rules of honour and the laws of evidence—who would not fear to stand before such a judge? The good and the bad must tremble alike; there could be no confidence, no one would be able to guess whether a man would be punished for an alleged crime or not. Let a ruler be as stern as he pleases in enforcing laws, yet if those laws be just, and the penalties of them known, no one need fear for his safety; but if the ruler be a tyrant, and if instead of acting according to law he act according to his own fancy, and treat his subjects in an

[1] R. W. Church, *Village Sermons*, iii. 258.

arbitrary manner, then indeed he may well be feared (as all tyrants are) with that fear which has torment, which breeds hatred, and which can never be united with love.

¶ The little pilgrim of the dawn has now the freedom of what Professor Sully calls "the realm of fancy." In his active brain he has a magic wand which makes him master of creation. He fills the blank spaces between the zenith and the nadir with his imaginings; makes the woods fearful with wolves, discovers the haunts of fairies and tree-folk in holes under the tree roots, and associates the church, the barn, the lane, the brook, the gate, with the people and places of his story-books.

This realm is not only the land of fancy, but that of fetish. To one little fellow, born in Siberia, the great god Pan was a reality. At night he would say, "Bye-bye, Poo-ah!"—"Good-night, Out-of-doors!" Another went in mortal dread of a feather from the eider-down or a fluff of the wool in which a banana had been packed, and he would flee with a yell when it moved towards him on a breath of air. Boy Beloved had an unpseakable horror of an indiarubber hot-water bottle, but if he had to pass near it, he would propitiate it with "Nice water-bottle!" and, watching it carefully, sidle out of danger.[1]

4. Fear is stirred by our wrong-doing. When we sin we cower before offended justice and regard God as a foe more terrible than Odin with his trenchant sword. Our thoughts of God grow darker as we grow in sin; and the awful aspect He seems to present to conscience darkens us like a shadow or deadens us like a pall. Human life is often like one of those great tragedies where, in the earliest scenes, a suspicion is infused of the darkness that is to deepen round the close. Unless the principles of Divine light and the powers of Divine love have wrought their influence upon the sinful heart, men carry about with them, everywhere and always, the consciousness of those dark secrets which linger from the earliest age of responsibility in the inmost recesses of the heart. Such a fear, always changing, always undermining, the joys and hopes of life, plants upon conscience its own growth, until sometimes it becomes an inquisitor with a whip of scorpions. To such men the very name of the God who governs the world is *fear*.

¶ Of the state of his mind and heart in regard to religion at Harrow Cardinal Manning has left the following record:—"It

[1] W. Canton, *Children's Sayings*, 20.

was not a good time with me. I do not think I ever ceased to pray all through my time at Harrow. I said my prayers, such as I had learned, I suppose, from my mother. I had always a fear of judgment and of the pool burning with fire. The verse in Apocalypse xxi. 8 was fixed in my whole mind from the time I was eight or nine years old, *confixit carnem meam timore*, and kept me as boy and youth and man in the midst of all evil, and in all occasions remote and proximate; and in great temptations; and in a perilous and unchecked liberty. God held me by my will against my will. If I had fallen I might have run the whole career of evil. In the midst of everything I had a veneration for religion. The thought of it was sweet to me, and I lived in the hope and temptation of being religious one day before I died. I never went to church unwillingly; and I always liked hearing sermons, which was my state when I went to Oxford.[1]

In darkest days and nights of storm,
Men knew Thee but to fear Thy form;
And in the reddest lightning saw
Thine arm avenge insulted law.

In brighter days, we read Thy love
In flowers beneath, in stars above;
And in the track of every storm
Behold Thy beauty's rainbow form.

And in the reddest lightning's path
We see no vestiges of wrath,
But always wisdom,—perfect love,
From flowers beneath to stars above.

See, from on high sweet influence rains
On palace, cottage, mountains, plains;
No hour of wrath shall mortals fear,
For their Almighty Love is here.[2]

5. Fear has an educative function. Fear of punishment, either as imminent or as distant, is not a false or bad principle of action in its own place, and for its own time. It is appropriate for the earlier stage of spiritual training. It is commonly called "servile"; but until a soul can realize its sonship, the servant's position is the one it must occupy, and has at any rate the assurance of "bread enough" for present needs. A Psalmist

[1] E. S. Purcell, *The Life of Cardinal Manning*, i. 27.
[2] Theodore Parker.

could draw an illustration from the wistful looking up of slaves under chastisement, and the fear which "has punishment," although in this sense "servile" is disciplinary; it marks a stage in the moral progress through which the supreme Educator, divinely equitable and patient, conducts His children by slow steps, in consideration of hearts not fully softened, and consciences not thoroughly enlightened, which, as yet, are unfit for a high religious standard.

The beginnings of morality and virtue are in fear; for, although men may finally be organized so highly that they shall work for the love of working, as men do that are in health of both body and mind, yet, in the beginnings, among low and rude people, men do not work because they like it. They bask lazily in the sun, and gorge themselves with food when they have it, and suffer the pangs of famine when they have it not. They learn to build houses, that they may not be exposed to the severity of the weather. They learn to cultivate the fields, that they may have food in winter. They are brought to habits of foresight and industry and regularity by the stimulus of fear. They are stimulated by the fear of suffering in themselves, and then by the fear of suffering in their households, when they begin to love them. It is fear that develops the human race in its earlier stages. It is fear that in the beginning promotes civilization. Fear is the strongest impulse towards improvement on the lower range in the scale of human life. Love is the highest element; but this is at the other extreme.

The filial relation is seen in its perfect shape only where a discipline is maintained and obeyed. Fear is the parent of love in the work of education. Such fear does not cast out love; it cherishes it and makes it a reasonable and a worthy love, based like all love worthy of the name upon reverence and honour. But this love in turn casts out that other fear of which St. John speaks—a fear which is born not of faith but of distrust; the fruit of ignorance, not of knowledge. "I know," says the Apostle Paul to Timothy, "whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." This is the calm and humble conviction of one in whom fear had been cast out by a perfect love. In Jesus Christ he had seen death abolished; for he had seen a sinful

world reconciled to the Father; he had seen in Him life and immortality brought to light through the Gospel; and it had banished fear for ever.

¶ It is said that the son of that profligate French prince Louis who is branded with the name of the "godless Regent" was, in his boyhood, deeply impressed by what his tutor told him about the punishments reserved for obstinate sinners. He grew up into manhood, serious, conscientious, pure in life, devout towards God, compassionate towards men. The fear of hell, as such, had done its work at the right time; it fairly burned out the germs of sinful passion; it prepared him, we cannot doubt, for a better spiritual condition at last attained. It may be so with many a youth who is not yet accessible to higher motives, but who believes that wicked ways lead to hell, and who therefore, in his own phrase, "keeps himself straight." Is not this "fear" worth something? Bishop Andrewes, alluding to it, observes that it is "as the base-court to the temple"; and adds that a man must do his duty "for fear of punishment, if he cannot get himself to do it for love of righteousness."[1]

¶ The genial Principal of Glasgow University, in the course of a public speech a year or two ago, told this story. An old couple in his country parish had taken with them to church their stirring little grandson, who behaved all through the service with preternatural gravity. So much was the preacher struck with the good conduct of so young a listener that, meeting the grandfather at the close of the service, he congratulated him upon the remarkably quiet composure of the boy. "Ay," said the old man with a twinkle in his eye, "Duncan's weel threetened afore he gangs in."[2]

> Wouldst thou abolish quite strongholds of self and sin?
> Fear can but make the breach for Love to enter in.[3]

II.

The Antagonism of Fear and Love.

1. Love and fear are antagonistic passions, and the tendency of the one is to overshadow and extinguish the other. The love of God is declared in this text to be the victorious antagonist of

[1] William Bright, *Morality in Doctrine*, 215.
[2] Sir Archibald Geikie, *Scottish Reminiscences*, 88.
[3] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 124.

that fear of sin which has torment in it. In general we can see without difficulty how the two, love and fear, do exclude one another. Fear is entirely based on a consideration of some possible personal evil consequence coming down upon us from that clear sky above us. Love is based upon the forgetfulness of self altogether. The very essence of love is, that it looks away from itself. It is thus free from that torturing and anxious thought, What will become of me? which makes the torment of fear as the sister of selfishness. It is because love is the going out of my heart, out of itself altogether, that it frees me at one sweep from all the torturing anxieties and trembling anticipations of personal consequences. Fill the heart with love, and there is an end to the dominion of fear.

¶ There is no exorcist of fear like love. Longing for the good of another will carry one through fire and water.[1]

> Our love wakes in the morning, unafraid
> To meet the little worries of the day;
> And if a haggard dawn, dull-eyed and grey,
> Peers in upon us through the window shade,
> Full soon love's finger, rosy tipped, is laid
> Upon its brow, and gloom departs straightway.
> All outer darkness melts before that ray
> Of inner light, whereof all love is made;
> Each petty trouble and each pigmy care.
> And those gaunt-visaged duties which so fill
> Life's path by day, do borrow of love's grace.[2]

2. "Fear hath torment," says the Apostle. Some artists have taken pleasure in painting monstrous forms—beings that never existed save in their own deranged imagination—things hideous to behold. Similar to this is the genius of fear; it opens its sombre canvas, spreads it out before the mind, covers it with phantoms of evils to come, filling the soul with anguish and misery. Thus it was with Job. When he could believe in the Divine goodness, hope dawned upon him, and he spoke cheerful words: "I know that my redeemer liveth." "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." "When he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold." But when he could not see God or realize His

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 20.
[2] E. W. Wilcox, *Poems of Love and Life*, 7.

goodness, when his light was turned into darkness, fear returned, producing "torment," by which it is always accompanied. Sometimes he is like a forsaken child, wandering hopelessly and alone at midnight in a desolate place, far from the habitations of men. He sighs for the light, but it comes not; feels after God, but He evades his touch. "O that I knew where I might find him! . . . I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him." Again and again does the image of his great affliction pass before his mind, like the spectre in the vision of Eliphaz, creating a depth of misery which he endeavours in vain to express.

¶ We have met with some who ought to have been bathing in the depths of the Divine love and sufficiency, suffering such torments as are described in Dante's *Purgatorio* or *Inferno*. To what is this torment due? To an untrusting fear of God. They do not find any comfort in their thought of God; always speculating as to what God will think of this or that, they know not the blessed joy of an uncareful, God-delivered soul. One would say to such, do not think that God saves you only upon condition that you carry about with you in your very breast the torment of hell. As you believe the Divine love, cast this torment from you and come at once into the more perfect enjoyment of that Divine grace, which does not extend its favour to you because you are so good, but that it may make you better.[1]

3. Love, unlike fear, inspires confidence. Love enlightens, purifies, and elevates the soul. We are influenced by the objects of our love. We cannot love a noble human character without in some degree becoming like that character; and if we love Christ, and God in Christ, we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory. Love is fruitful in good works; it inspires the mind to keep the commandments of Christ, and imparts power to surmount the greatest difficulties, while fear takes away our strength, enervates the soul, and deprives us of our moral and spiritual energy. The marvellous labours and self-denial of the apostles are accounted for by the love that constrained them. It is, moreover, essential to acceptable service, for there is no virtue in that which is done from mere fear. A man doing his duty simply because he is afraid to leave it undone, resembles the

[1] G. J. Proctor.

crouching slave who works because the lash of the taskmaster hovers over his head, and is ready to descend the moment he desists; but he who obeys from love is like an affectionate child who hastens to do his father's will because obedience is to him a real delight.

¶ On a lonely moorside, far from any other habitation, dwells a weakly woman, the wife of a powerfully built crofter. They live alone in their humble cot, the weakly wife entirely in the power of her strong husband. If he so willed he could do her grievous harm, but does she ever think of that? No, for perfect love casts out all fear. She rejoices in his strength because she has perfect confidence in his love, she cannot fear because she knows and believes fully the love that he has for her. All this you say is perfectly natural. Certainly, and is it not just as natural that we should, when we are joined in covenant relationship with God, trust Him as fully and realize that any feeling of fear is simply impossible, because we know and believe the love which He hath toward us?[1]

4. The love which casts out fear is not a vague emotion towards an unknown God; nor is it the result of a man's willing that he will put away from himself his hatred and his indifference, and will set himself in a new position towards God and His mercy: but it rises in the heart as a consequence of knowing and believing the love which God hath to us. Hence, again, it is the conqueror of fear. That flowed from conscience trembling before the half-seen face of the Divine Judge. This comes when the eyes are opened to behold the full Divine mercy in the face of Jesus Christ and there to see that God hath no anger, but is infinite Love. It is not by any power in our love to appease the stingings of sin that we get rid of the fear. We lose it because our love comes from apprehending that great Gospel and blessed hope, that God's love is ours, ours in His Son, ours that our love may be perfectly fixed upon it, ours without disturbance from any of His awful attributes, ours without fear of loss or harm from *any* events. Believing this, the heart fills with a mighty tide of calm responding love which sweeps away on the crest of its rejoicing wave, the vileness, the sorrows, the fears, which once littered and choked the channels. They are flooded out, and the heart is delivered.

[1] O. O. Eldridge, in *The Preacher's Magazine*, 1894, p. 318.

¶ A little love has not mass enough in it to drive out thick, clustering fears. There are hundreds of professing Christians who know very little indeed of that joyous love of God which swallows up and makes impossible all dread, who, because they have not a loving present consciousness of a loving Father's loving will, tremble when they front in imagination, and still more when they meet in reality, the evils that must come, and who cannot face the thought of death with anything but shrinking apprehension. There is far too much of the old leaven of selfish dread left in the experience of many Christians. "I feared thee, because thou wert an austere man, and so, because I was afraid, I went and hid my talent, and did nothing for thee" is a transcript of the experience of far too many of us. The one way to get deliverance is to go to Jesus Christ and keep close by Him.[1]

5. The love which casts out fear heightens reverence. There is a fear which is the foundation of all religion, and which is the abiding duty of Christian men. And it is worth noticing how love, which casts out dread, and makes us cease to be afraid of God, perfects reverence and makes us venerate with holy awe far deeper than ever subsisted by the side of terror, and yet makes us stand much nearer to God than when we were slaves, and crouched before the image of Him which conscience set up. A man who is trembling about personal consequences has no eye to appreciate the thing of which he is afraid. There is no reverence where there is desperate fear. He that is trembling lest the lightning should strike him has no heart to feel the grandeur and to be moved by the solemn awfulness of the storm above his head. And a man to whom the whole thought, or the predominant thought, when God rises before him, is, How awful will be the incidence of His perfections on my head! does not and durst not think about them and reverence Him. Perfect love takes out of the heart all that bitter sense of possible evil coming on one and leaves one at liberty, with thankful, humble heart, and clear eye, to look into the centre of the brightness and see there the light of His infinite mercy. Love destroys slavish fear, and perfects that fear which is reverence.

¶ He seemed to bear about with him a certain hidden, isolating, constraining, and ennobling fear, which quenched the dazzling light of many things that attract most men; a fear

[1] A. Maclaren, *Triumphant Certainties*, 303.

which would have to be clean got rid of before time-serving or unreality could have a chance with him. Whatever that fear was it told upon his work in many ways; it helped him, probably, in great things to be unworldly; it sustained with an imperious and ever-present sanction his sense and care for perfect justice, in act and word, in his own life and in his verdicts on the past: and it may well have borne part in making his style what it was: for probably few men have ever written so well and stayed so simply anxious to write truly.[1]

III.

The Expulsion of Fear.

1. One way of trying to banish fear is levity or indifference. There is nothing more striking than the power we have of forcing ourselves to forget because we know that it is dangerous to remember—that strange power which a man has of refusing to think of a subject because he knows that to think of it would be torture and terror. It is a strange faculty that we all have of forgetting unwelcome thoughts and shutting our eyes to the things that we do not want to see, like Nelson when he put the telescope to his blind eye at Copenhagen because he would not obey the signal of recall. But surely it is an ignoble thing that men should ignore or shuffle out of sight with inconsiderateness the real facts of their condition, like boys whistling in a churchyard to keep their spirits up, and saying "Who's afraid?" just because they are so very much afraid.

¶ One of our poets gives a grim picture of a traveller on a lonely road, who has caught a glimpse of a frightful shape close behind him,

> And having once turned round walks on,
> And turns no more his head.

The dreadful thing is there on his very heels, its breath hot on his cheek; he feels it though he does not see, but he dare not face round to it, he puts a strong compulsion on himself, and with rigidly fixed face, strides on his way, a sickening horror busy with his heart. An awful image that, but a true one with regard to what many men do with their thoughts of God! They know that that thought is there, close behind them. They feel sometimes as

[1] *Life and Letters of Dean Church*, xxii.

if its hand were just coming out to be laid on their shoulders, and to stop them. And they will not turn their heads to see the Face that should be the love, the blessedness, the life of their spirits, but is—because they love it not—the terror and freezing dread of their souls.[1]

2. It is "perfect" love that casts out fear. The more devotedly the heart clings to God the more complete will be its victory over fear. The more we love God the more we grow like God. He that loveth not knoweth not God. He that is born of God loveth. He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. "If there were not something sunny in the eye," says Goethe, "it could not see the sun"; so if there be no love within our hearts, we can never know God, for He is love, and we can know Him only as we love Him. If our love is not a reflection of His love, if it is so weak and feeble that, when the cloud passes over it and darkens the sunlight, it cannot keep our heart from failing because of fear; then let us look up to Him who is our life, and seek that gift of love which He alone can bestow, and the dominion of fear will end.

¶ The most effectual and permanent remedy for any passion is to give power enough to its opposite to control it. We see empirical cases of this. For instance, mirthfulness stands over against combativeness. A man who has humour and sees things in a mirthful light escapes destructiveness and combativeness more easily than anybody else. A child is angry and hateful, and strikes back; but the nurse sets a little monkey jumping, and he laughs; and that minute the child's temper is all gone. The two elements cannot reign together. The nurse, empirically, has fallen upon the right philosophy. In the whole range of life, over against the causes of fear are the opposites; and by keeping them alive and in full play a man can control fear more easily than by direct and specific acts of the will.

We find that medicine acts in the same way. If a person is under the influence of overwhelming grief the physician orders a change of place, or association, or occupation. A new class of influences is brought into play, and they cure or medicate the trouble. So all the things that tend to courage, to hope, to trust, to mirthfulness, to gaiety, whatever elements are radiant in the human mind, are the natural born doctors of the things in the human mind that are dusky, low-browed, and care-pierced.[2]

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] Henry Ward Beecher.

3. The way to perfect love and freedom from fear is the old way of obedience. Before we can love God truly we must first have learned to obey His will even in the smallest duties of our life. We so often begin the other way. We look right away from the little duties, from the common everyday work, which we ought to love, from the friendships which we ought to be making here, and think we can know at once what is meant by loving God. And how often, as the years go on, we fail; and know that the reason for our failure was that we had not yet learned the meaning of Christ's words, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" —those words which should teach us that we cannot know what perfect love is until we know something of love in its simplest form, as love for our work and love for those around us. Only that love which has its roots in perfect obedience and simple trust is strong enough to cast out fear.

¶ I remember the instance of a pale woman who taught a village school in summer. One rude boy tried her very soul, and there was a strife of some weeks before she gained the ascendancy; and some months passed by before her spirit conquered his, and he became, not an abject servant, but the servant of love; so that, although he was stronger than a dozen of her physically, though he had the power rudely to discompose her spirit, and stamp out the order of the school, not her shadow moved more obediently to her movements than he did to her wishes; for he loved her. That which in the beginning she compelled him to do, and which he did very poorly, he afterwards did with eagerness and a great deal better. For the inspiration of love, when men are prepared for it, is a nobler inspiration than that of fear. It is more comprehensive, more fruitful, more beneficent. And while it has its efficiency in this life, it has the promise, the signet, the earnest of the life which is to come.[1]

4. Perfect love rests on the bosom of Christ, and looks forward to the day of judgment without apprehension. That is the particular thought which this text enshrines. Love God, and fear not, the Apostle seems to say, for now we know to what inconceivable lengths God's love for us has gone. The crown and perfect work of our love of God is shown in this, that it enables us to look forward even to the dreadful day of judgment with

[1] Henry Ward Beecher.

courage and boldness. The terrors and sufferings which may come upon us here in our mortal life, are light and trifling compared with the horror which must fall upon all things in that closing day of doom. But even of that, the soul which loves and cleaves to God can face the thought, can wait for it with calmness and quiet. For why? Because as He is, so are we in this world. Because we are here on the side of God. Because they who love God are, as God is, on the side of good, of truth, of holiness, which God must and will one day make victorious.

¶ Think of St. John himself, the disciple whom Jesus loved, the disciple whose one hope and longing in the world was to see the Kingdom of his Master, and to rejoice with Him in glory, whom he had loved in the bitter day of defeat and shame. He was the disciple who felt his whole heart beat with the heart of his Master; who knew that what Jesus Christ loved, he loved too; that what Jesus Christ worked for, he himself was ready to die for; that what Jesus Christ counted sin and abomination, *that* he himself loathed as an accursed thing. He felt that after having known Jesus Christ and His love, all that this world could offer him was not worth a thought; he lived in the mind of Jesus Christ about eternity and the things of time, and felt that all the greatness, and glory, and beauty of this world was only that which his Master had despised and trampled on. With what thoughts of things to come would such a man live? What would he fear of sorrow, or perplexity, or loss, or pain, or death? What would the worst evils which can visit man be to him who lived in the love of Jesus Christ, on whose bosom he had leaned at supper—who was now at God's right hand? What to St. John, personally, would be all the woes and plagues which—when in the isle of Patmos he saw the vision of the future—he beheld gathering upon the world of the ungodly? He might tremble, he might pity, he might weep for others; but in the earthquake, and pestilence, and storm, and death, what fear for himself? To him the day of judgment was the day of Christ, it was the coming back and appearance of his beloved and departed Lord, the beginning of that kingdom of glory for which he daily waited and daily prayed. Awful as it was, he could have boldness when it came. He was ever abiding in Christ and His love, that, as he says elsewhere, when his Master should appear, he might have confidence, "and not be ashamed before him at his coming."[1]

[1] R. W. Church, *Village Sermons*, iii. 262.

O thou that walkest with nigh hopeless feet
  Past the one harbour, built for thee and thine,
Doth no stray odour from its table greet,
  No truant beam from fire or candle shine?

At his wide door the host doth stand and call;
  At every lattice gracious forms invite;
Thou seest but a dull-grey, solid wall
  In forest sullen with the things of night!

Thou cravest rest, and Rest for thee doth crave,
  The white sheet folded down, white robe apart.—
Shame, Faithless! No, I do not mean the grave!
  I mean Love's very house and hearth and heart.

The Ray and the Reflection.

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The Ray and the Reflection.

We love, because he first loved us.—1 John iv. 19.

Some truths, when we have learned them, are to us like precious jewels which we keep in caskets, hidden most of the time from sight, our great satisfaction regarding them being simply their possession, simply that they are ours. Other truths, when we have learned them, are like new countries into which our lives have entered, and in which they thenceforth constantly live. There is a new sky over our head and a new earth under our feet. They fold themselves about us and touch every thought and action. Everything that we do or think or are is different because of them. Of this second sort is the truth of the priority of God's love.

¶ I think I might say of this sentence what the poet says of prayer: it is "the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try," and yet it is one of the "sublimest strains that reach the majesty on high." Take a little believing child and ask her why she loves the Saviour, and she will reply at once, "Because He loved me and died for me": then ascend to heaven where the saints are perfect in Christ Jesus and put the same question, and with united breath the whole choir of the redeemed will reply, "He hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." When we begin to love Christ we love Him because He first loved us; and when we grow in grace till we are capable of the very highest degree of spiritual understanding and affection, we still have no better reason for loving Him than this, "Because he first loved us."[1]

I.

God's Love to us.

1. *God is first.*—Unless God had been first, we—our whole human race in general and each of us in particular—never would

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

have been at all. We are what we are because He is what He is. Everything that we do God has first made it possible for us to do. Every act of ours, as soon as it is done, is grasped into a great world of activity which comes from Him; and there the influence and effect of our action is determined. Everything that we know is true already before our knowledge of it. Our knowing it is only the opening of our intelligence to receive what is and always has been a part of His being who is the universal truth. Every deed or temper or life is good or bad as it is in harmony or out of harmony with Him. Everywhere God is first; and man, coming afterward, enters into Him and finds in God the setting and the background of his life. If we love, He loved first.

¶ It is as when up the morning sky, all coldly beautiful with ordered ranks of cloud on cloud, is poured the glow of sunrise, and every least cloud, still the same in place and shape, burns with the transfiguring splendour of the sun. So is it when the priority of existence is seen to rest in a Person, and the background of life is God. Then every new arrival instantly reports itself to Him, and is described in terms of its relationship to Him. Every activity of ours answers to some previous activity of His. Do we hope? It is because we have caught the sound of some promise of His. Do we fear? It is because we have had some glimpse of the dreadfulness of getting out of harmony with Him. Are we curious and inquiring? It is that we may learn some of His truth. Do we resist evil? We are fighting His enemies. Do we help need? We are relieving His children. Do we love Him? It is an answer of gratitude for His love to us. Do we live? It is a projection and extension of His being. Do we die? It is the going home of our immortal souls to Him.[1]

2. *The love of God to us precedes our love to God.*—From all eternity the Lord looked upon His people with an eye of love, and as nothing can be before eternity, His love was first. He loved us before we had any being, before we had any desire to be loved, before any repentance on our part was possible. Divine love is its own cause, and does not derive its streams from anything in us whatsoever. It flows spontaneously from the heart of God, finding its deep wellsprings within His own bosom. This is a great comfort to us, because, being uncreated, it is unchangeable. If it had been set upon us because of some goodness in us, then

[1] Phillips Brooks, *The Light of the World*, 45.

when the goodness was diminished the love would diminish too. If God had loved us second and not first, or had the cause of the love been in us, that cause might have altered, and the supposed effect, namely, His love, would have altered too; but now, whatever may be the believer's condition to-day, however he may have wandered, and however much he may be groaning under a sense of sin, the Lord declares, "I do earnestly remember him still."

Strictly speaking, the words of the Apostle only declare the priority of the Divine love towards us over ours towards Him. But we may fairly give it a wider meaning, and say—first of all, before creation and time, away back in the abysmal depths of an everlasting and changeless heart, changeless in the sense that its love was eternal, but not changeless in the sense that love could have no place within it—first of all things was God's love; last to be discovered because most ancient of all. The foundation is disclosed last when you come to dig, and the essence is grasped last in the process of analysis. So one of the old psalms, with wondrous depth of truth, traces up everything to this, "For his mercy endureth for ever." Therefore, there was time; therefore, there were creatures—"He made great lights, for his mercy endureth for ever." Therefore, there were judgments—"He smote great kings . . . for his mercy endureth for ever." And so we may pass through all the works of the Divine energy, and say, "He first loved us."

¶ We may say of the silvered sea that it shines because the moon sheds upon it its silvery light. We may say of the full-orbed moon that she shines in soft beauty because she reflects the glory of the far-absent sun. But of the sun we can only say that it shines because it shines. We know of no eternal sources from which it draws its glory. So it is with the great heart of God. He loves, because He loves. "He first loved us."[1]

¶ If you look on the buds on the trees in the spring-time you will see they are all covered over with a gummy hard case, which keeps them from opening out. Well, there was a little bud like this and its little heart was dark and cold and uncomfortable. But one day the sunshine came streaming upon it, and it felt the hard case melt away from round it, and as the light grew brighter and warmer the case all melted away and the bud opened out into a beautiful blossom, and the fine, rich sunbeam

[1] W. E. Burroughs.

found its way right into the little bud's heart, then, when the bud saw the light it smiled and said, "See! see!—I have made the sun!" "Nay, nay, my child," said a little sunbeam passing by, "you didn't make the sun—it was the sun which made you. It was the sun which nourished you and cherished you, and opened your leaves and touched your heart. You should love the sun because the sun first loved you."[1]

3. *The love of God begets love in us.*—One thing may be first and another second, and yet the first may not be the cause of the second, there may be no actual link between the two: but here we have it unmistakably, "We love, *because* he first loved us"; which signifies not merely that this is the motive of which we are conscious in our love, but that this is the force, the Divine power, which created love in us.

¶ The meeting-point of God and man is love. Love, in other words, is, for the poet, the supreme principle both of morality and of religion. Love, once for all, solves that contradiction between them which, both in theory and in practice, has embarrassed the world for so many ages. Love is the sublimest conception attainable by man; a life inspired by it is the most perfect form of goodness he can conceive; therefore, love is, at the same moment, man's moral ideal, and the very essence of Godhood. A life actuated by love is Divine, whatever other limitations it may have . . . God is Himself the source and fulness of love.

'Tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:
In the first is the last, in Thy will is my power to believe.
All's one gift.

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst Thou—so wilt Thou!
So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
And Thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in![2]

¶ It is with love exactly as with life. You know that there has been a controversy in the field of science about the origin of life, which has raged for a considerable part of this century, and has only lately been settled. One school said that life was born of itself; the other that life must come from a Life without. One school, to take an illustration that makes it plainer, took an

[1] J. Reid Howatt, *The Children's Angel*, 16.

[2] Henry Jones, *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, ch. vi.

infusion of air, heated it to a very high temperature, put it into a flask, sealed it hermetically, put it aside. A few weeks after the flask was opened; there was life inside it. Now, you see, they claimed this as spontaneous generation. The other side said, "It is not conclusive. You did not apply enough heat." They heated it several degrees higher till there could not possibly have been any existing germs of life within the flask. They opened it after a lapse of time; there was no life. And now they accept this truth, life alone can propagate life. Life cannot spring into existence, it must be communicated. It is exactly the same thing with regard to love. You cannot make the black coals on your hearth burst into flame until you apply a light. If you want to love, you must wait till love comes from without. There is just one source of love, and that is God. And there can be no love in the human heart till the love of God comes in and creates it there. It must come by a genesis, not by spontaneous generation. We love because God has first loved us.[1]

He seeks for ours as we do seek for His;
Nay, O my soul, ours is far more His bliss
Than His is ours; at least it so doth seem,
  Both in His own and our esteem.

His earnest love, His infinite desires,
His living, endless, and devouring fires,
Do rage in thirst, and fervently require
  A love 'tis strange it should desire.

We cold and careless are, and scarcely think
Upon the glorious spring whereat we drink.
Did He not love us we could be content:
  We wretches are indifferent!

'Tis death, my soul, to be indifferent;
Set forth thyself unto thy whole extent,
And all the glory of His passion prize,
  Who for thee lives, who for thee dies.[2]

(1) But in order that the love of God may beget love in us there must be sufficient evidence of His love. What evidence have we? We have evidence enough of God's love—at least for the ordinary experience of life—in the beauty of the world, the beneficence of nature, and all the joy of human intercourse.

¶ Mazzini crossed the St. Gotthard with some danger. "The

[1] J. Watson, in *The Contemporary Pulpit*, ii. 296. [2] Thomas Traherne.

scene," he wrote back to England, "was sublime, Godlike. No one knows what poetry is, who has not found himself there, at the highest point of the route, on the plateau, surrounded by the peaks of the Alps in the everlasting silence that speaks of God. There is no atheism possible on the Alps."[1]

¶ One who went with Dr. McLaren to the Isle of Wight writes: "I saw during our walks on one or two lovely mornings that wonderful light in his eyes, his lips slightly parted, his face almost transfigured, a look of ecstasy as he gazed *lovingly* (no other word will do) at the minute flowers covering the merest cranny in the moss-grown walls by the roadside. He said no word, but one could see that he was worshipping at the 'Temple's inner shrine.'"[2]

¶ Wilberforce did not do things by halves. What he did, he did with all his might. His likes and dislikes were strong. He felt strongly, and so he spoke and acted strongly. There were three things for which he evidently had an intense love: the Truth, Nature, Home. And if we were permitted to look for the underlying cause we should probably find it in a perfectly simple belief in the Fatherhood of God as revealed to us by our Lord. The truth was God's truth. The world was God's world. The home was God's home.[3]

(2) It is only when we come to the dark sad side of life that our faith begins to fail. And here the Incarnation takes up the thread of proof, not by removing the problem of the mystery of sorrow from our minds, but by revealing God Himself as willing to bear it with and for us, and so enabling our hearts to feel it the crowning testimony of His love. The soul that has reached this certitude needs no other motive to ensure its obeying the commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." But there are many who have not attained it, from fearing to make the initial venture of taking up their cross. With all their disbelief in miracles, they still seek after a sign. A sign, they must remember, cannot produce conviction; for conviction comes by obedience, and by that alone. But a sign may arrest attention, and lead to obedience in the end. And there is a sign which outsoars all other miracles, and grows only more wonderful as the ages pass along, and that is the empire of Jesus Christ over human hearts. He claimed it, and history has justified the claim.

[1] Bolton King, *Mazzini*, 116. [2] *Dr. McLaren of Manchester*, 46.
[3] J. B. Atlay, *Bishop Ernest Wilberforce*, 234.

No other founder of religions, patriot, martyr, king, or saint, has ever claimed it or received it. In all history it is unique. Critics tell us that the sayings of the Sermon on the Mount were not original, and the suffering of Calvary no greater than what other men have borne, and even that the Gospel narratives are in many points inaccurate. But all these things, if granted, only force into stronger relief the wonder of the fact that Jesus Christ, crucified, dead, and buried, more than eighteen centuries ago, has inspired in every age, and among wholly diverse nations, in thousands after thousands of sinful and saintly hearts alike, not merely reverence for His memory, or sympathy for His sufferings, or enthusiasm for His cause, but a personal, passionate, living adoration, passing the love of woman; and characterized by a finality, a restfulness, a peace, which finite objects of affection never can afford. That this is so is a fact beyond the reach of controversy, and a fact which defies explanation on any other view than that Jesus Christ is God—the Infinite and therefore adequate Object of human love, the desire of all nations, who alone could say, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

¶ Like the skilfully painted portrait which seems to look at each individual in a crowded room, the Saviour on the Cross appears to gaze on me. I listen in the silence, and He, as it were, addresses me, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," and as I look I reply in wonder, "He loved me, and gave himself for me!" And this love becomes a double bond, uniting with his Lord and Master the Christian's heart and life.

> Love has a hem to its garment
> That touches the very dust,
> It can reach the stains of the streets and lanes,
> And because it can, it must.

(3) But if the highest manifestation of the love of God is seen in the cross of Christ, then God loves us not because of our deserving but of His grace. In our natural desire to ascertain the cause of things, we can generally give a good reason why we love this person or that. A relationship—husband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend—is quite enough to account for it; or it may be in his nature or conduct that we see what causes our love to go out to another. These reasons may be often inadequate, sometimes even unworthy, but they satisfy our desire

to trace the emotion to its originating cause. And when we are asked to believe that God loves us, even us, we are led at once to ask, Why? Why should God love me? And if we know even a little of Him or of ourselves—His greatness and our littleness, His glory and our poor estate, His holiness and our sinfulness—we have ample ground for doubting the fact. We fail entirely to account for it, and so we disbelieve it. If we were good, we say, the good God would love us. If we were holy, the Holy One would love us. Perhaps this is the earliest theology most children learn: "If you are not good God will not love you!" "If you do that God will not love you!" As if sin, the child's or the man's, placed the sinner outside the sphere of the love of God. This heresy lies at the root of all false religions, and of all hypocrisies, that we must by our goodness win the love and favour of God; till we are "good" God will have nothing to say to us!

¶ We are amongst savages of the very lowest type, caring for nothing but what satisfies the cravings of their fleshly lusts. Nevertheless, I love them, not because of any virtue in them, but for the sake of Him who died for them, as well as for us. And although it is not my lot to preach, and a thing I cannot do, yet I hope, while working with and among them, that my life and example will help to mould them to the likeness of our Lord and Master.[1]

¶ "I love poverty," says Pascal, "because He loved it. I love goods, because they enable me to succour the needy. I keep faith with all the world, I do not return evil for evil; and I would that those who wish me harm had reached a state like mine beyond the power of men to make or mar. I try to be true and just to all, and I feel peculiar tenderness for those to whom God has more closely bound me. In all my actions, public and private, I keep in view Him who will one day judge them, and to whom they are all offered up beforehand. Such are my feelings. Every day of my life I bless my Redeemer, who has implanted them within me. Out of a mass of weakness and misery, pride, ambition, and ill-will He has made a man freed from all these evils by the power of grace."[2]

[1] J. MacConnachie, *An Artisan Missionary on the Zambesi*, 77.

[2] Viscount St. Cyres, *Pascal*, 229.

II.

Our Love to God.

The Revised Version omits "him" in the first clause, and simply says "we love," without specifying the object. That is to say, for the moment John's thought is fixed rather on the inward transformation effected, from self-regard to love, than on considering the object on which the love is expended. When the heart is melted, the streams flow wherever there is a channel. The river, as he goes on to show us, parts into two heads, and love to God and love to man are, in their essence and root-principle, one thing.

1. *Our love is the heart's response to God's love.*—We love, because He first loved us. Our love is secondary, His is primary; ours is reflection, His the original beam; ours is echo, His the mother-tone. Heaven must bend to earth before earth can rise to heaven. The skies must open and drop down love, before love can spring in the fruitful fields. And it is only when we look with true trust to that great unveiling of the heart of God which is in Jesus Christ, only when we can say, "Herein is love—that he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," that our hearts are melted, and all their snows are dissolved into sweet waters, which, freed from their icy chains, can flow with music in their ripple, and fruitfulness along their course, through our otherwise silent and barren lives.

As the sun holds our planet in the strong grasp of its attraction, while the earth by its own very weak gravitation is also held in its place, so does the consciousness of God's great love grasp and sustain my soul and my life; and then my own weak and feeble love to Him (itself the "first-fruits of the Spirit") serves to "bind my wandering heart" to Him. I apprehend, though with poor and trembling hand, Him by whom I am apprehended with a hold which no other power can destroy. It is to this love that our Lord appeals as the motive of all obedience. Hence the tender, anxious, repeated inquiry, "Lovest thou me?" This love will account sufficiently for single actions and for whole lives. The perfumes which the woman poured upon the Saviour's

feet, and the "spikenard very precious" which the sister of Bethany lavished on her Divine Master, were prompted by a like love. The grandest human life of service and of suffering ever lived on earth is explained and accounted for in the words, "the love of Christ constraineth us." "We love, because he first loved us."

¶ How all reasoning and arguing fails where one word of love softens, and influences, and does the work! and it is, as ever, by dwelling on the good rather than driving out the evil that the right thing is brought about.[1]

¶ The Holy Spirit cries in us with a loud voice and without words, "Love the love which loves you everlastingly." His crying is an inward contact with our spirit. This voice is more terrifying than the storm. The flashes which it darts forth open the sky to us and show us the light of eternal truth. The heat of its contact and of its love is so great that it well-nigh consumes us altogether. In its contact with our spirit it cries without interruption, "Pay your debt; love the love which has loved you from all eternity." Hence there arises a great inward impatience and also an unlimited resignation. For the more we love, the more we desire to love; and the more we pay of that which love demands, the greater becomes our debt to love. Love is not silent, but cries continually, "Love thou love." This conflict is unknown to alien senses. To love and to enjoy, that is to labour and to suffer. God lives in us by His grace. He teaches us, He counsels us, He commands us to love. We live in Him above all grace and above our own works, by suffering and enjoying. In us dwell love, knowledge, contemplation, and possession, and, above them, enjoyment. Our work is to love God; our enjoyment is to receive the embrace of love.[2]

O eyes that strip the souls of men!
There came to me the Magdalen.
Her blue robe with a cord was bound,
Her hair with Lenten lilies crowned.

"Arise," she said, "God calls for thee,
Turned to new paths thy feet must be.
Leave the fever and the feast,
Leave the friend thou lovest best:
For thou must walk in barefoot ways,
To give my dear Lord Jesus praise."

[1] A. P. Stanley, *Memoirs of Edward and Catherine Stanley*, 308.
[2] M. Maeterlinck, *Ruysbroeck and the Mystics*, 95.

Then answered I—"Sweet Magdalen,
God's servant, once beloved of men,
Why didst thou change old ways for new,
That trailing red for corded blue,
Roses for lilies on thy brow,
Rich splendour for a barren vow?"

Gentle of speech she answered me:—
"Sir, I was sick with revelry.
True, I have scarred the night with sin,
A pale and tawdry heroine;
But once I heard a voice that said
'Who lives in sin is surely dead,
But whoso turns to follow me
Hath joy and immortality.'"

"O Mary, not for this," I cried,
"Didst thou renounce thy scented pride,
Not for a taste of endless years
Or barren joy apart from tears
Didst thou desert the courts of men,
Tell me thy truth, sweet Magdalen!"

She trembled, and her eyes grew dim:—
"For love of Him, for love of Him."[1]

2. *Our love is the necessary and moral result of our persuasion of God's love to us.*—It is a part of the ordinary constitution of our nature that we should love those who, we believe, love us. Sometimes far out at sea the sailor sees the sky grow tremulous and troubled. The cloud seems to be all unable to contain itself; its under surface wavers and stretches downwards toward the ocean. It is as if it yearned and thirsted for the kindred water. A great grasping hand is reached downward and feels after the waves. And then the sailor looks beneath, and lo, the surface of the waves is troubled too; and out from the water comes first a mere tremble and confusion, and then by and by a column of water builds itself, growing steadier and steadier, until at last it grasps the hand out of the cloud, and one strong pillar reaches from the sea into the heavens, from the heavens to the sea, and the heavens and the sea are one. So you must make man know that God loves him, and then look to see man love God.

[1] J. E. Flecker, *Forty-Two Poems*, 58.

¶ What will you do if you are sent to carry the Gospel to your friend, your child? Will you stand over him and say, "You must love God; you will suffer for it if you do not"? When was ever love begotten so? "Who is God?" "Why should I love Him?" "How can I love Him?" answers back the poor, bewildered heart, and turns to the things of earth which with their earthly affections seem to love it, and satisfies itself in loving them. Or perhaps it grows defiant, and says, "I will not," flinging back your exhortation as the cold stone flings back the sunlight. But you say to your friend, your child, "God loves you," say it in every language of yours, in every vernacular of his, which you can command, and his love is taken by surprise, and he wakes to the knowledge that he does love God without a resolution that he will.[1]

¶ It was early in his career that he happened one day to be alone for a few minutes with a young lady, who afterwards became the wife and active helpmate of a devoted minister of Christ in Edinburgh. In early life she had felt her need of a Saviour, and tried to become a Christian, but failed in finding the sinner's Saviour. She looked too much into her own heart, and sought there, and sought in vain, for that kind and degree of conviction of sin which she thought to be necessary to fit her for coming to Jesus. As a natural result, she was almost reduced to despair. Mr. North, guided by the Spirit, on whose direction he constantly relied, and with that aptitude to understand the exact position of an anxious soul with which he was gifted, asked her if she was saved, and on her replying that she was not, he asked her, Why? and she answered, "Because I do not feel that I love Jesus." He then said simply, "That does not matter, *He loves you.*" No other word was spoken, but this was enough, and was the means of leading her to trust in the Saviour's dying love to sinners. She was enabled henceforth to rest in that love, and to follow Christ, and after a useful and happy life, closed it, in the beginning of 1877, by a very triumphant death.[2]

3. And our love to God is *the best evidence to ourselves* that we are passed from death into life.

¶ Robert Hall charmed the most learned by the majesty of his eloquence, but he was as simple as he was great, and he was never happier than when conversing with poor believers upon experimental godliness. He was accustomed to make his journeys on horseback, and having been preaching at Clipstone he was on his way home, when he was stopped by a heavy fall of snow at

[1] Phillips Brooks, *The Light of the World*, 49.

[2] K. Moody-Stuart, *Brownlow North*, 406.

the little village of Sibbertoft. The good man who kept the "Black Swan," a little village hostelry, came to his door and besought the preacher to take refuge beneath his roof, assuring him that it would give him great joy to welcome him. Mr. Hall knew him to be one of the most sincere Christians in the neighbourhood, and therefore got off his horse and went into the little inn. The good man was delighted to provide for him a bed, and a stool, and a candlestick in the prophet's chamber, for that rustic inn contained such an apartment. After Mr. Hall had rested awhile by the fire the landlord said, "You must needs stop here all night, sir; and if you do not mind I will call in a few of my neighbours, and if you feel that you could give us a sermon in my taproom they will all be glad to hear you." "So let it be, sir," said Mr. Hall, and so it was: the taproom became his cathedral, and the "Black Swan" the sign of the gospel banner. The peasants came together, and the man of God poured out his soul before them wondrously. They would never forget it, for to hear Mr. Hall was an event in any man's life. After all were gone Mr. Hall sat down, and there came over him a fit of depression, out of which he strove to rise by conversation with his host. "Ah, sir," said the great preacher, "I am much burdened, and am led to question my own condition before God. Tell me now what you think is a sure evidence that a man is a child of God." "Well, Mr. Hall," said the plain man, "I am sorry to see you so tried; you doubt yourself, but nobody else has any doubt about you. I hope the Lord will cheer and comfort you, but I am afraid I am not qualified to do it." "Never mind, friend, never mind, tell me what you think the best evidence of a child of God?" "Well, I should say, sir," said he, "*if a man loves God* he must be one of God's children." "Say you so," said the mighty preacher, "then it is well with me; I do love Him."[1]

¶ The opening paragraphs of Wesley's *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* are perhaps the finest epitome of the ruling purpose of the Great Revival. The lifeless, formal religion of the time was a sad contrast to that religion of love which they had found. The love of God and of all mankind "we believe to be the medicine of life, the never-failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world, for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand. There is humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering, the whole image of God, and at the same time a peace that passeth all understanding, and joy unspeakable and full of glory."[2]

[1] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1876, p. 343.

[2] J. Telford, *The Life of John Wesley*, 112.

III.

Our Love to Man.

1. Man's life expands when God's love possesses it. It becomes as the universe. God is everywhere its occupant, and yet excludes not one particle of His infinite productions. We are not bidden to abstract all affections from the creature when bidden to love God "with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and with all the mind." It is a principle laid down by St. John—"Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." And therefore the way to increase in that love which alone deserves the name as being anything better than a development of selfishness, is to increase in love to God. Piety will produce charity. The more we love God the more will we love man.

¶ Those thinkers who cannot believe in any gods often assert that the love of humanity would be in itself sufficient for them; and so, perhaps, it would, if they had it.[1]

2. We can show our love by loving service. Where the love of the Almighty has been excited, it will become a ruling principle, and manifest itself in every department of conduct. If we love God, it will necessarily follow that we will desire to please Him; that we will delight in contemplating His glories; that the sense of His favour will be our choicest treasure; and that, consequently, obedience to His will, and earnestness in winning others from their enmity, will be evident in our actions.

¶ I think that it was at this time of his life that he used to go down every night of the week to the Grassmarket and convoy a man home past the public-houses.[2]

¶ But still, the main lesson which her lady-pupils carried away from Walsall was not how to dress wounds or how to bandage, or even how to manage a hospital on the most popular as well as the most economical method, but rather the mighty results which the motive-power of love towards God, and, for His sake, towards mankind, might enable one single woman to effect. Sister Dora said to a friend who was engaging a servant for the hospital, "Tell

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *Tremendous Trifles*.
[2] G. A. Smith, *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 114.

her this is not an ordinary house, or even hospital; I want her to understand that all who serve here, in whatever capacity, ought to have one rule, *love for God*, and then I need not say love for their work. I wish we could use, and really mean, the word *Maison-Dieu.*"[1]

¶ One night she was sent for by a poor man who was much attached to her, and who was dying of what she called "black-pox," a violent form of small-pox. She went at once and found him almost in the last extremity. All his relations had fled, and a neighbour alone was with him, doing what she could for him. When Sister Dora found that only one small piece of candle was left in the house, she gave the woman some money, begging her to go and buy some means of light, while she stayed with the man. She sat on by his bed, but the woman, who had probably spent the money at the public-house, never returned; and after some little while the dying man raised himself up in bed with a last effort, saying, "Sister, kiss me before I die." She took him, all covered as he was with the loathsome disease, into her arms, and kissed him, the candle going out almost as she did so, leaving them in total darkness. He implored her not to leave him while he lived, although he might have known she would never do that. It was then past midnight, and she sat on, for how long she knew not, until he died. Even then she waited, fancying, as she could not see him, that he might be still alive, till in the early dawn she groped her way to the door, and went to find some neighbours.[2]

3. The more we love others and make our love manifest in our life, the more will we persuade them of the reality of love and therefore of the love of God. Our age is remarkable for triumphs of mercy, and not the least of the blessings which the merciful have rendered to us is that they have shown disinterested virtue to be possible. He who ennobles himself ennobles his race, draws away many a wavering recruit from the seat of the scorner, giving him an ideal and a hope in life. Ask those who have thus elevated their generation whence they drew their inspiration, and they will one and all reply: "We love, because he first loved us." They will say: If we have taught our soldiers and sailors to keep their bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity; if we have cleansed and clothed the waifs and strays of our modern Babylons and sent them forth as welcome colonists

[1] M. Lonsdale, *Sister Dora*, 102. [2] *Ibid.* 52.

to subdue the virgin lands of our empire; if we have rescued woman from corruption and slavery; if we have carried thrift and peace and purity into the lowest dens of misery—we were but following Him who promised rest to the weary and heavy-laden. If our light shines before men, if they see any good works in us, let them glorify not us, but our Father which is in heaven, the Sun of all our day, from whom every good and perfect gift descends. We are unprofitable servants: we have done but a scantling of our duty. We that are strong *ought* to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. If He, the Lord and Master, washed our feet, we also *ought* to wash one another's feet. It is the part payment of a debt.

¶ To many a man the strongest force for good has come by his finding out that some one loves him and trusts him far more than he has ever deserved. He discovers or slowly realizes that some one better, purer, nobler than himself cares for him, believes in him, loves him; and the discovery makes him ashamed of his unworthiness and ingratitude: it gives him a new hope, a higher standard for life. He has been content, perhaps, to be no better than the most easy-going, the least particular of his set; and then he finds out that a pure, true heart—his mother's, it may be, or his wife's, or his child's, or his friend's—is pouring out on him its wealth of love and trust, thinking him good, expecting great things of him, ready to wait or toil or suffer for his sake: some special occasion, it may be, or some side-light lets him see how deeply and generously he is cared for; and he begins to say to himself that it's rather a shame to go on as he does. There must be some hope for him, some power or way for him to grow better, if people care for him, believe in him like that; anyhow, it's a shame not to try to be a bit more like what their love makes them think he is. And so he tries; and, because they first loved him, he learns to love; he begins to live a steadier, purer, more unselfish and dutiful life: a life in which love springs up higher, stronger, happier, like a tree growing in the soil that suits it.[1]

¶ It was in the fall of 1859 that my future husband, then a young man of about twenty-one years, came to our section to teach school, where he used his talents and influence for the good of all with whom he came in contact. He was an excellent teacher, loved and respected by parents and pupils alike. He soon found his way to my father's and mother's home, for the former teachers had not been strangers there. He said afterwards

[1] F. Paget, *The Redemption of War*, 58.

that when he saw me for the first time that day in my own home, he determined that I should be his. The task proved to be not as easy as may have seemed; but he had made up his mind, and, as in after-years in more important matters, when he won in spite of difficulties, so it was then. He poured forth his wealth of love and affection and compelled me to love him in return as I had never loved before. Of course we had to wait, but the time did not seem long. It was unalloyed bliss. Three years of school, of walks and talks, and when he left for college there were the letters, the visits, the hopes and aspirations and preparations, and with all at times a tinge of sadness lest I was not quite worthy of it all.[1]

¶ So they began to show him every possible kindness, and one after another helped him in his daily tasks, embracing every opportunity of pleading with him to yield to Jesus and take the new path of life. At first he repelled them, and sullenly held aloof. But their prayers never ceased, and their patient affections continued to grow. At last, after long waiting, Nasi broke down, and cried to one of the Teachers,—"I can oppose your Jesus no longer. If He can make you treat me like that, I yield myself to Him and to you. I want Him to change me too. I want a heart like that of Jesus."[2]

¶ There was one case of awful despair in a poor dying woman who refused to listen to any words of the mercy of God, saying only "too late, too late." To her, Mr. Marriott devoted much care and many prayers. It seemed as though no impression could be made upon her. The cry went on—"too late, too late, too late for *me*." But Mr. Marriott's tender fervour to bring her to faith and trust in her Saviour prevailed at last. He said,—"But you *do* believe in the love of those around you, now that Jesus sends it to you?" With what seemed the last effort of life, she raised herself,—clasped her arms round the neck of the sister who was attending to her,—and kissing her answered,—"Yes, it *is* love." The last struggle followed almost immediately and we heard her say, "Jesus, save me,"—the words he had entreated her to use. So his prayers had been heard. She died in hope and faith.[3]

Upon the marsh mud, dank and foul,
A golden sunbeam softly fell,
And from the noisome depths arose
A lily miracle.

[1] Mrs. Robertson, in *The Life of James Robertson*, 25.
[2] *John G. Paton*, ii. 278.
[3] J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, i. 327.

Upon a dark, bemired life
A gleam of human love was flung,
And lo, from that ungenial soil
A noble deed upsprung.[1]

[1] L. M. Montgomery.

Victory over the World.

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VICTORY OVER THE WORLD.

And this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.—1 John v. 4.

1. THESE words occur in a letter written by St. John to all the different Christian communities in the cities and towns of the Empire. These little churches or congregations consisted of men and women of humble position, little or no wealth, not much learning, not much influence, and they were found in cities given up for the most part to modes of life wholly incompatible with Christianity. The little Christian communities had gone through the severest persecutions. Hundreds and thousands of Christians had been put to death for refusal to worship the Roman Emperor; they were condemned as disloyal subjects, as atheists—because they had no image of their God—as secret conspirators. The power of Rome was irresistible. They were surrounded with a society which tolerated evils and vices which would shock them, and on which at present they had made little or no impression. There was wild extravagance of luxury, and abject poverty and starvation side by side, with no poor law, no hospitals, and but very slender private charities. There was a cruelty towards slaves and children which was so common that it had ceased to shock people. There were vices which cannot be named, against which Christians set their faces like flint. This was the world that St. John saw, and these were the little communities to whom he wrote. And what he said was: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Is it not an amazing, a sublime audacity, to say that the faith of these little insignificant churches was overcoming this great powerful world of Roman armies, pagan vices, and heathen cruelties and superstitions? Yet this is what St. John says: "Our faith is overcoming this world."

2. Of all the Apostles there was none that dwelt so constantly on "overcoming" as St. John. One can see that the idea of battle and triumph runs through his Epistles, as well as through the Book of Revelation. It is he that speaks of "overcoming the wicked one"; it is he that records those glorious promises which we find in the Epistles to the Seven Churches, promises that belong to the overcoming one. In all these references we have the thought of a victorious power overcoming a mighty, perpetual, opposing force. And yet, what is St. John's ideal of the Christian life? Is it one of feverish excitement and strain? No, it is the very opposite of this. He more than all the disciples had learned the secret of the rest of faith; he knew what it was to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He it was that learned the meaning of the paradox that the secret of all real activity is stillness of soul, and that the condition of continuous victory is an attitude of repose on the power of God. Well, that teaches us that the man who knows most about victorious conflict is not the man of restless energy and intense human activity, but the man who realizes his own weakness and knows fully what it is to rest in Divine omnipotence. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

I.

The World that Challenges the Believer.

1. What is the world? The term rendered "world" means properly "arrangement"; and is then applied to the universe of created things in its orderly and systematic conformation, as opposed to the confusion of the original chaos. In all this, however, the idea is rather that of God's handiwork than of God's antagonist: in this sense, the world is not God's enemy, but God's witness. The term passed, however, in the hands of the inspired writers, into a designation of things visible and temporal, the state of things that now is, and the persons who have their treasure, their home, and their all, in it, as opposed to things spiritual and eternal, the state of things that shall be, and the persons who belong, even in this life, as to their home and higher being, to that Heaven in which God dwells. The world thus became a brief title for all that is not God nor of God, all that is

earthly, sensual, and evil, all that tempts to sin, and all those who live without God, apart from God, or in enmity against God.

¶ In the Apostle's time, the world meant, no doubt, the whole mass of human society, with the exception of the handfuls here and there of those who had embraced the Christian faith. The line of separation between the Christian and the non-Christian elements of society could be readily and sharply drawn. But it is not so now. The Church has leavened the world; the world has leavened the Church. The non-Christian element of society is no longer a distinct and definable aggregation of men. The world exists, but it is, so to speak, no longer visible and separable. Its existence is as real, but its form is vaguer. It is the sum of the many forces, principles, and tendencies which oppose and counteract the progress of the spirit and the spiritual. It exists not only among us, but in us. It is all that part of each one of us which gives a more or less active resistance to growth in goodness, in knowledge, and in sympathy; the sum of the influences of fashion, and prejudice, and selfishness: "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."[1]

¶ The world of the nineteenth century is very different indeed from that of the first. There is no Nero or Domitian now on the world's throne; there is no Coliseum with its hungry lions, and with its hungrier, crueller crowd of brutes in human form, to gloat over the sufferings of their innocent victims. The fight of faith is in another region, perhaps a harder one for us, for it was not of a lesser but of a greater conflict that the Apostle spoke when he said, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The wrestling of the nineteenth century has been of that high and difficult kind; the great foe has been Materialism, uttering itself in sceptical thought on the one hand, and in selfish luxury on the other. The world which is faith's antagonist has laid aside in our day its bludgeons, and all its apparatus of torture and intimidation, and has taken up instead flute, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music to soothe conscience and to allure along the flowery paths of inglorious ease to sunless gulfs of ignominious death. And it is unutterably sad to think what multitudes allow their faith to lose all its fibre, and permit the aspirations and enthusiasm of youth to die down into the dullest commonplace, till they find satisfaction enough for their immortal spirits in coining their hearts, and dropping their blood for drachmas. Not

[1] *Memorials of Edwin Hatch*, 4.

the ferocious dragon of the Revelation, but the insidious Mammon installed in our time as the prince of the power of the air, and his wiles are as much to be dreaded as the ferocity of the beast.[1]

¶ This is the world of which Carlyle said, "Understand it, despise it, loathe it; but cheerfully hold on thy way through it with thine eye on the highest loadstars." This is the world of which Horace Walpole wrote, "It is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel." This is the world of which Wordsworth wrote:

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.

2. This world is a gigantic power, not easily resisted. It is not a thing of yesterday: it is a tradition of many ages, of many civilizations, which, after flowing on in the great current of human history, has come down, charged with the force of an accumulated prestige, even to us. To this great tradition of regulated ungodliness each generation adds something; something of force, something of refinement, something of social or intellectual power. The world is Protean in its capacity for taking new forms. Sometimes it is a gross idol-worship; sometimes it is a military empire; sometimes it is a cynical school of philosophers; sometimes it is the indifference of a *blasé* society, which agrees in nothing but in proscribing earnestness. The Church conquered it in the form of the pagan empire. But the world had indeed had its revenge when it could point to such Popes as were Julius II., or Alexander VI., or Leo X.; to such courts as were those of Louis XIV. or Charles II.; for it had throned itself at the heart of the victorious Church. So now between the world and Christendom there is no hard and fast line of demarcation. The world is within the fold, within the sanctuary, within the heart, as well as without. It sweeps round each soul like a torrent of hot air, and makes itself felt at every pore of the moral system. Not that the world is merely a point of view, a mood of thought, a temper or frame of mind, having no actual, or, as we should say, no objective existence. It has an independent existence. Just as the Kingdom of God exists whether we belong to it or no, and yet, if we do belong to it, is, as our Lord has told us, within us as an atmosphere of moral power and light; so the world, the kingdom of another being,

[1] J. Munro Gibson.

exists, whether we belong to it or no, although our belonging to it is a matter of inward motives and character. The world penetrates like a subtle atmosphere in Christendom, while in heathendom it is organized as a visible system. But it is the same thing at bottom. It is the essential spirit of corrupt human life, taking no serious account of God, either forgetting Him altogether, or putting something in His place, or striking a balance between His claims and those of His antagonists. And thus friendship with it is "enmity with God," who will have our all. And a first duty in His servants is to free themselves from its power, or, as St. John says, to overcome it.

(1) Sometimes the world brings its power to bear on us by direct assault. In the first ages of the Church, when it was confessedly pagan, it made great use of this instrument for enforcing its supremacy. It imprisoned and killed Christians from the days of Nero to the days of Diocletian. It persecuted by social exclusiveness, by inflicting loss of property and position, by bodily tortures and by death. The mildest forms of persecution are all, thank God, that are now possible in this country, but if a man be deprived of advantages which he would otherwise have enjoyed, if he be met by a cold bow or a vacant gaze where he expects a cordial greeting, if he feels, in short, that he is under a social ban, and all this because he has dared to obey his conscience where obedience has been unwelcome or unpopular, he is, to all intents and purposes, persecuted. And if he can stand this persecution patiently, calmly, silently, so much the better for him. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." But how is he to stand it? By "seeing him who is invisible." Who that has had to undergo a painful operation does not know the support that is derived from holding the hand of a friend who stands by, full of love and sympathy, till all is over? And faith links the hands of the persecuted with the very hand of Christ. "Fear not," He says, "for I am with thee. I have called thee by my name: thou art mine." And it is thus that the world, when it has done its very worst, is vanquished.

(2) The world assails us by offers of compromise, by appealing to our interests, our desires, our passions. It seeks to throw its

spell over us. As music charms the ear, so do the world's honours, applause and popularity the hearts of many. Over some they exercise an irresistible sway. Over all they are mighty. There are few who can bear, without a sense of pain, the turning away from them of the world's favour. It may be regarded as a test of the strength and sincerity of one's religion, that one can bear without wincing the frown or scorn of the world. It requires more than human strength to contend against and overcome that for which we have a warm desire. But the more we delight in the favour and approval of God, the less will we care for that of the world. The approbation of God and our own consciences is a better support than all the smiles the world can bestow.

(3) The world seizes the opportunity of attacking us when we are worn out by manifold cares and duties and troubles. Its influence is continuous and persistent. It seeks to absorb us. How many notable housewives, busy from morning to night with their household affairs, their children, their servants, could tell us that they scarce can find a minute to read the Bible, or to stop and think where they are going; and that at morning they are so anxious to get to the avocations of the day, and at evening so completely wearied and worn out, that they have not time or heart for prayer! How many a toiling, anxious man, working and scheming to make ends meet, and to maintain his children, and to advance them in life, has not a thought to spare for the other world—for his own soul's eternal destiny, or for the eternal destiny of those he holds dear! It is when we are "careful and troubled about many things," that we are ready to forget that "one thing is needful."

¶ The world overcomes us, not merely by appealing to our reason, or by exciting our passions, but by imposing on our imagination. So much do the systems of men swerve from the truth as set forth in Scripture that their very presence becomes a standing fact against Scripture, even when our reason condemns them, by their persevering assertions, and they gradually overcome those who set out by contradicting them. In all cases, what is often and unhesitatingly asserted at length finds credit with the mass of mankind; and so it happens, in this instance, that, admitting as we do from the first that the world is one of our three chief enemies; maintaining, rather than merely granting, that the outward face of things speaks a different language from

the word of God; yet, when we come to act in the world, we find this very thing a trial, not merely of our obedience, but even of our faith; that is, the mere fact that the world turns out to be what we began by actually confessing concerning it.[1]

¶ One of the severest trials of Gladstone's life was the assassination of his trusted lieutenant and most intimate personal friend, Lord Frederick Cavendish. And it is pathetic to be told that in the stress of duty and responsibility following on this tragedy he referred sadly to the impossibility of dwelling on his loss as one of the penalties of his position. But think of the faith that could so rise superior to a gnawing grief as to be in no wise unfitted by it for the closest thought and most assiduous application. It is an illustration of the restful side of his faith.[2]

3. If the world is not being overcome by us, then we are being overcome by the world. It is like a stream. We are either going up against the stream, or we are being carried down by the current. When is it that the world is conquering us? When we are induced to accept its views, its maxims, instead of the principles of God's holy word; when we are influenced by the opinion of men and by the spirit of the age. The world is conquering us when it is petrifying all our desires after God, when it chills all our aspirations upward, and when it steals out of our hearts the very inclination to pray to God and to listen to His voice. The world is overcoming us when it fills us with the fear of man, so that we are afraid to speak for Christ, and are dumb. The world is conquering us when it fills us with love of earthly things, and leads us to set our affections upon things below.

¶ This is the victory wherewith the world overcomes us, even our doubt. The world has a principle, a bond of union, a faith; and the world must conquer us if we have none. It is necessary that we should keep hold of this truth, which we have, it would seem, almost forgotten, that faith is meant to defend us, not to be defended, to be an active principle within us, not the dead body round which the battle rages. Faith and religion ought to be our weapons of warfare, the instruments by which we are to do our duty. But how far will our present faith answer to this definition? "A man's religion consists not," as Carlyle has said, "of the many things he is in doubt of, and tries to believe, but of the few he is assured of, and has no need of effort for believing."[3]

[1] J. H. Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 122. [2] J. Munro Gibson.
[3] A. T. Lyttelton, in *Keble College Sermons*, 1877–1888, p. 193.

¶ The world, which he defined as "the activities of this life with God left out," seemed to him to invade everything in London, even the Church, tempting some of the clergy to aim at success and popularity, and become absorbed in efforts to gather large congregations around them by competing in attractions with neighbouring churches.

"We have moved to London House till Easter. It makes my work easier for me, as I have not so much travelling. It also brings me more visitors and makes me feel more in the world. But oh! how much world there is! The devil and the flesh are not nearly so dangerous combined. The trial of a bishop is that he is always engaged in outside matters. I really rejoice in Confirmations, which bring me into contact with the young. I do not find so many human beings in London as there were at Peterborough."

"I am perpetually overwhelmed with work. I have to express more opinions than I have time to verify. I am in the very centre of all that is worldly. I am exposed to all the most deteriorating influences. All that I can do is to realize these facts, and try to possess my soul as well as I can."[1]

Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly.
There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—
This good God,—what He could do, if He would,
Would, if He could—then must have done long since:
If so, when, where and how? some way must be,—
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit
Some sense, in which it might be, after all.
Why not, "The Way, the Truth, the Life"?[2]

II.

The Faith that Conquers the World.

1. Faith is not a new faculty conferred upon the soul, but the quickening and expansion of a faculty that we already possess.

[1] *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, ii. 224.

[2] Browning, *Bishop Blougram's Apology*.

Cold iron is precisely identical with iron heated in the fire; but though the metal is the same, the fire that has entered into it entirely transforms its condition, and endows it with a new power. And the fire also, by entering the iron, takes upon itself new action, making of the metal a vehicle of its dynamic potency. So does the Spirit of God take and transfuse and transform our ordinary faculties for His own great ends.

Thus faith is the conquering principle in religion. For Christian faith is not a thing apart from one's ordinary human nature and imposed upon it from without; it is the expansion of an original inherent moral quality, common to us all; it is the spiritualization of a natural faculty; it is the daily energizing, vitalizing power in which we live and do our best work, brought into contact with the Divine power. So glorified, it overcomes the world—the worldly spirit with its carnal aims, countless temptations, and unholy methods, being the hardest there is to overcome. But even unglorified, it has this overcoming power, and if we only come to see this clearly, we shall not find so much difficulty in transferring to the life of religion a quality which we have learnt to regard as the supreme essential in every secular sphere.

¶ Without belonging to any religious communion, Renan has his full share of religious feeling. Though he himself does not believe, he is infinitely apt at seizing all the delicate shades of the popular creeds. I may perhaps be understood when I say that faith does not possess him, but that he possesses faith.[1]

2. The virtue of faith lies in its object. Faith is in itself nothing better than an organ, an instrument; and it derives its character entirely from that upon which it is fixed. The adorable majesty of God, His omnipotence, holiness, and love, His nature, so far as it has been revealed to us, the union of perfect God and perfect Man in the person of Jesus, the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction offered by Him for the sins of the whole world, the free and gracious offers of pardon which are made in Him, His mediatorial sovereignty over the world, the secret and mysterious workings of God the Holy Ghost—these are the objects proposed to faith, upon which, if we fix the eye of the soul, we shall assuredly have power to overcome the world in

[1] Anatole France, *On Life and Letters*, 284.

the strength of that Divine vision. And in all this there is one central figure, even the Son of God made very Man, nailed to the Cross, pouring forth His precious blood for our sakes and in our stead, and then in triumph risen, exalted, crowned, sitting on the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.

¶ The Power is all in Christ. Faith is the link that binds us to Him. Is there any power in faith? None whatever. Is there any power in a railway coupling? No; but look at these carriages, look at that train, look at that locomotive. Where is the power? You see it moving along, and you say, "All the power is in the locomotive." Well, how do these carriages manage to get along if it is all there? You say: "There is a coupling, a link, a very simple thing." There is no power in the coupling, but it links the power in the locomotive with the carriages, and if you break the link, all the power is gone.[1]

¶ People say, "Lord, increase our faith." Did not the Lord rebuke His disciples for that prayer? He said, "You do not want a great faith, but faith in a great God. If your faith were as small as a grain of mustard-seed, it would suffice to remove this mountain!"[2]

3. The faith that conquers is a personal force or power in the soul. Not only does the truth conquer all that is false; not only does union with our invincible head make our victory sure; but we also conquer in the exercise of a personal faith, sustaining us in all the conflicts in which we engage. Such was the faith of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and all the host of worthies whose names and deeds illustrate the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It was by *faith* that "Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." It was by faith that "Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." It was by faith that he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." It was by faith that he esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Faith made men strong, courageous, and capable of daring exploits. Through faith common men subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the

[1] E. Hopkins, in *The Keswick Week*, 1900, p. 27. [2] Hudson Taylor.

mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword. By faith Joseph exercised self-restraint, regarded sin as an offence to God, and said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" By faith men still overcome temptations, endure cruel mockings and scourgings, bear privations and tortures, discharge duties, lay aside besetting sins, achieve the mastery over themselves and all their enemies.

¶ Faith is not the mere sum of probabilities, conjecture, or reasonings of any kind. . . . It implies the action of the affections and of the will, the exercise of all those inner powers of our being which the Hebrews called "the Heart."[1]

¶ Often enough our faith beforehand in an uncertified result *is the only thing that makes the result come true.* Suppose, for instance, that you are climbing a mountain, and have worked yourself into a position from which the only escape is by a terrible leap. Have faith that you can successfully make it, and your feet are nerved to its accomplishment. But mistrust yourself, and think of all the sweet things you have heard the scientists say of *maybes*, and you will hesitate so long that, at last, all unstrung and trembling, and launching yourself in a moment of despair, you roll in the abyss.[2]

Yet over sorrow and over death
Cometh at last a song that saith—
"This, this is the victory,
Even our faith."
Love maketh all the crooked straight,
And love bringeth love to all that wait,
And laughter and light and dewy tear
To the hard, blind eyes of Fate.
All shall look tenderly yet and free
Outside over the lea,
And deep within the heart of me.

4. The Apostle speaks of the victory in the past tense, as if it were already accomplished. Our Lord Himself exclaimed, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." These words were uttered by Him in the Upper Room in that hour when the burden of a great mystery rested upon Him, when He stood beneath the chilling shadow of the Cross itself before He descended into the valley of the

[1] *Edward King*, 120. [2] W. James, *The Will to Believe*, 59.

Kidron, and crossing the brook, entered into Gethsemane, there amid the shadows of the Garden to pray more and more earnestly. Thus, before the conflict had as yet reached a deadly heat, the note of victory was sounded. This was the joyous anticipation of One who knew that virtually the conflict was now over. That fact was the inspiring assurance which He gave to His disciples. They, too, would have very similar tribulations, though not in the same degree, but those troubles would not necessarily mean defeat to them. He had conquered the world, why need they therefore be dispirited? The fact that He had conquered was the pledge of their final victory if they were His. He had supplied the great precedent. The world henceforth would be a conquered world. It would to the end of time have to acknowledge one total defeat at least. Christ, moreover, identified Himself with His followers, so that His conquering power should be also manifested in them.

5. The text does not say that faith is the means by which the world is overcome. It does not say that by faith the battle is fought and the victory is gained. It says that *faith is the victory itself.* It does not bid us marshal our forces against the world. It does not command us to contend with this or that evil. It does not require us to array on one side faith and on the other the world, and assure us that when the weary fight is done, through blood and toil and bitter contest, the latter shall be overcome. It draws us up into a higher plane. It leaves the world far below. It lets it move on for the time unheeded. It does not care for its hurried rush, its shout of defiance, its cry of victory. It places before the soul the eternal realities—heaven and hell, life and death, the power of the sacraments, the influence of prayer, the ministrations of the angels, the watchful love of an overruling Providence, and, above them all and in them all, the Incarnate Saviour uniting man and human nature to the Eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Three in One and One in Three.

¶ The one victory over the world is to bend it to serve me in the highest things—the attainment of a clearer vision of the Divine nature, the attainment of a deeper love to God Himself, and of a more glad consecration and service to Him. That is the victory—when you can make the world a ladder to lift you to

God. That is its right use, that is victory, when all its tempting voices do not draw you away from listening to the Supreme Voice that bids you keep His commandments. When the world comes between you and God as an obscuring screen, it has conquered you. When the world comes between you and God as a transparent medium, you have conquered it. To win victory is to get it beneath your feet and stand upon it, and reach up thereby to God.[1]

¶ One of our famous philosophers tells of an Italian who was placed upon the rack to secure a confession, and who bore the agony with courage by crying out continually: "I see it, I see it." What did he see? The victim explained afterwards that he had conjured up the direr punishment that awaited him if he revealed his secret. He used the thought and vision of the scaffold to turn his mind away from the consciousness of present pain. So by looking at things which are not seen, men and women have borne the greatest hardships, and triumphed over the fiercest foes. And if it be the case that fear can in a measure expel the sense of pain and make torture tolerable, what will the passion of a great and thrilling love not do? Faith is the link that brings our love into contact with the Eternal Love, that puts us alongside the infinite resources of God. It is

> The desire of the moth for the star
> Of the night for the morrow,
> The devotion to something afar
> From the sphere of our sorrow.

(1) Faith has been conquering the world of ignorance and error by the promulgation of truth, which is the law of the intellectual life. There is now a lessening tendency to acquiesce in what is false, a growing tendency to find out what is true. Men are beginning to regard facts rather than opinions, the things that are rather than the things that are imagined. New tracks are being opened up, and every step of the old tracks is being resurveyed. This spirit of investigation is the spirit of Christianity. There are, no doubt, unbelievers in the manifoldness of the works and ways of God, who take every discovery as a fresh rebuff, who would put chains upon the feet of every traveller into the domain of science or of history, lest his report of what is to be found there should be different from their own or other men's dreams. But the number of such timorous doubters is lessening; the number of believers in truth is increasing.

[1] A. Maclaren.

¶ When Dr. Lazeer, in Cuba, made up his mind by experiment that yellow fever was propagated solely through the bite of a mosquito, and gave his life in supreme testimony to this truth, the world not only added one more undying name to her roll of heroes, but began forthwith to act upon the new knowledge sanctified by this sacred test.[1]

What thou of God and of thyself dost know,
So know that none can force thee to forego;
For oh! his knowledge is a worthless art,
Which, forming of himself no vital part,
The foremost man he meets with readier skill
In sleight of words, can rob him of at will.
Faith feels not for *her* lore more sure nor less,
If all the world deny it or confess:
Did the whole world exclaim, "Like Solomon,
Thou sittest high on Wisdom's noblest throne,"
She would not, than before, be surer then,
Nor draw more courage from the assent of men.
Or did the whole world cry, "O fond and vain!
What idle dream is this which haunts thy brain?"
To the whole world Faith boldly would reply,
"The whole world can, but I can never, lie."[2]

(2) Faith has been conquering the world of selfishness, by erecting the republic of unselfishness, by spreading the spirit of love, which is the law of social life. There is a greater desire now to relieve the burdens of the afflicted and the poor, an increasing effort to reform the criminal, a growing admission of the possible variety of human beliefs, a lessening disposition to settle all international disputes by the terrible decision of war, a growth of the mutual respect which is the parent of liberty—for the mutual respect of each for each means the common liberty of all. The growth of this is a growth of Christian influence, and of the Christian temper: it is a victory of "our faith," for it is the victory of Christian love.

¶ Alexander the Great, when he was master of the whole world, was the greatest slave within it, for he was discontented even with his victories; the pride of conquest held him in captivity by its iron chain. No; he who aims at the highest greatness in this world may only be more greatly selfish than the rest of mankind, and what is that but to be really little? He is

[1] D. Scudder, *The Passion for Reality*, 45. [2] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 315.

truly great who is the most unselfish, and he is the least of all who lives for himself alone.[1]

¶ In the Patriarchate of Antioch there is a marvellous memorial to the victory of Christianity. In the centre of it, in a mountain region not far from Antioch, are to be found the ruins of one hundred and fifty cities within a space of thirty or forty leagues. In the most glorious days of Christianity, when it ruled the Roman world, these Christian cities were invaded by either the Persians or the Saracens, and, as the story goes, forsaken by their inhabitants in a single night. Twelve hundred years have passed away since then, and, in spite of time and earthquake and the burning Syrian sun, the traveller who visits them scarce dares to call them ruins. Not as thoroughly preserved, indeed, as Pompeii or Herculaneum, they still tell the story of Christian civilization in the days when the Church had recently won its victory over persecution and tyranny. The signs of comfort and of peace appear on all sides. Bath-houses and stables, balconies and shaded porticoes, winepresses, and even jars for preserving wine, yet remain. Still are to be seen magnificent churches, supported by columns, flanked by towers, surrounded by splendid tombs. Crosses and monograms of Christ are sculptured on most of the doors, and numerous inscriptions may be read upon the monuments. He who has visited Pompeii, with its sad record of the refinement and corruption of Rome, cannot fail to notice the difference, as he reads written over the door of a house, "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth for evermore"; and on another, "Lord, succour this house and them that dwell therein"; or on a tomb where the dead are sleeping, "Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge; no evil shall approach thee, no plague come nigh thy dwelling."

But what is most observable is the tone of triumph and victory that the inscriptions seem to breathe. On the porch of a house is written, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" and a sepulchral monument records the triumphant sentence, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Even an obscure painter who, while engaged in decorating a tomb, tried, it would seem, his chisel on the wall of rock, as he rudely traced a monogram of Christ, in his enthusiasm as a liberated Christian, carved in the stone to remain for ages, "This conquers."[2]

¶ "I do not know," Mazzini says, "speaking historically, a single great conquest of the human spirit, a single important step for the perfecting of human society, which has not had its roots in a strong religious faith."[3]

[1] C. H. Spurgeon. [2] J. de Koven. [3] Bolton King, *Mazzini*, 223.

The Peril of Idolatry.

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THE PERIL OF IDOLATRY.

My little children, guard yourselves from idols.—1 John v. 21

THESE would seem to be the last words of Scripture that were written, the last charge of the last Apostle, the last solemn warning in which the Holy Spirit sums up the Gospel for all generations. Yet they sound strange. Surely we have no idols. What need have we of such a charge as this?

Not much, if wood and stone are needed to make an idol; but if we are putting anything whatever in God's place, we are not so clear. Some calling themselves Christians have worshipped saints on every high hill and under every green tree; some have made the Church an idol, and some the Bible; some have made money their god, others have worshipped success, and others have sold themselves for pleasure.[1]

¶ It may well be that the Spirit had brought before St. John's mind the danger arising from the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, was spoken of to them as a man like themselves; a fact that might lead them from the Deity of the man Christ Jesus to deifying other creatures, and investing these with Divine attributes, and attributing to them Divine power, and approaching them with prayer and praise, which, though fitting worship in the case of Jesus Christ, would be idolatry addressed to other creatures. And so St. John adds these words to the end of his Epistle, lest the doctrine he had just insisted on should be misused and perverted, as indeed we know from Church history it has been.[2]

I.

TENDENCIES TO IDOLATRY.

1. Man everywhere has some appreciation of the spiritual. We may describe it as we will, but everywhere man is conscious of it,

[1] H. M. Gwatkin, *The Eye for Spiritual Things*, 91.
[2] W. E. Jelf, *A Commentary on the First Epistle of St. John*, 82.

in some form or fashion. If we take the lowest form of that conception of which we know anything, that which is called "fetish worship," what is the root idea? It is a recognition of the spiritual, it is an expression of fear. A fetish worshipper, if he be unaccompanied by his fetish, will refuse to trade with you, will refuse to have any dealings with you. Why? Because he thinks that the carrying of his particular fetish keeps away evil spirits. His conception of the supernatural is the conception of antagonistic forces, and he endeavours to charm them away. All charms, all necromancy, all attempts to avert some catastrophe by this kind of thing, are of the same nature. They are a recognition of that which is beyond. And it is not only a recognition of the spiritual as beyond the material; it is also a recognition of relationship of some kind. Idolatry is always born out of this recognition, and out of a consciousness of need. The need is an anxiety. It may simply be a need of protection, or it may be a need of communion; but whether this or that, every idol is a demonstration of the Divine origin of man. As St. Augustine said long ago, God has made the human heart so that it can never find rest save in Himself. After that rest humanity everywhere is seeking, and all idolatry is a demonstration of the search.

¶ When the populace of Paris adorned the statue of Strasbourg with immortelles, none, even the simplest of the pious decorators, would suppose that the city of Strasbourg itself, or any spirit or ghost of the city, was actually there, sitting in the Place de la Concorde. The figure was delightful to them as a visible nucleus for their fond thoughts about Strasbourg; but never for a moment supposed to *be* Strasbourg.

Similarly, they might have taken delight in a statue purporting to represent a river instead of a city,—the Rhine, or Garonne, suppose,—and have been touched with strong emotion in looking at it, if the real river were dear to them, and yet never think for an instant that the statue *was* the river.

And yet again, similarly, but much more distinctly, they might take delight in the beautiful image of a god, because it gathered and perpetuated their thoughts about that god; and yet never suppose, nor be capable of being deceived by any arguments into supposing, that the statue *was* the god.

On the other hand, if a meteoric stone fell from the sky in the sight of a savage, and he picked it up hot, he would most probably lay it aside in some, to him, sacred place, and believe

the *stone itself* to be a kind of god, and offer prayer and sacrifice to it.

In like manner, any other strange or terrifying object, such, for instance, as a powerfully noxious animal or plant, he would be apt to regard in the same way; and very possibly also construct for himself frightful idols of some kind, calculated to produce upon him a vague impression of their being alive; whose imaginary anger he might deprecate or avert with sacrifice, although incapable of conceiving in them any one attribute of exalted intellectual or moral nature.[1]

2. Man must have a God, and when he loses the vision of the true God, he makes a God for himself. The making of idols is an attempt to find God, and God is always built up out of the imagination, and according to the pattern of the builder himself. Every idol is the result of a conception of God which is the magnified personal self-consciousness of the man who creates his idol. Or to put it in another form, idolatry is self-projection. First man imagines his God, and the God he imagines is himself enlarged. "Eyes have they, noses have they, hands have they, feet have they." The Psalmist in those words took the physical facts, and showed how man in making a God projects his own personality; and calls that magnified personality God. It is seen at once that the result is magnified failure, intensified evil. So all human conditions which are evil, being active in the thinking of the man who would construct his deity, are to be found intensified in that deity. To go back to the Old Testament, we have Baal, Molech, and all the evil deities. What are they but the evil things of humanity magnified? And so everywhere we find that men have made idols according to their own understanding.

Dear God and Father of us all
  Forgive our faith in cruel lies,
  Forgive the blindness that denies,
Forgive Thy creature, when he takes
  For the all-perfect love Thou art
  Some grim creation of his heart.
Cast down our idols; overturn
  Our bloody altars: let us see
  Thyself in Thy humanity.

[1] Ruskin, *Aratra Pentelici* (*Works*, xx. 229).

3. The whole history of the Jews, of which the Bible is the record, is one long warning and protest against idolatry. Abraham became the father of the faithful because he obeyed the call of God to abandon the idols which his fathers had worshipped beyond the Euphrates. Jacob made his family bury under the Terebinth of Shechem their Syrian amulets and Syrian gods. But Israel was constantly starting aside into idolatry like a broken bow. Even in the wilderness they took up the tabernacle of Molech, and the star of their god Remphan, idols which they had made to worship. Even under the burning crags of Sinai, "they made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image"; and for centuries afterwards the apostate kings of northern Israel doubled that sin in Dan and Bethel.

The seven servitudes of the Book of Judges were the appropriate retribution for seven apostasies. From Solomon to Manasseh, king after king, even of Judah, forsook Jehovah. Then came the crashing blow of the Exile, the utter ruin of every hope of domination or of independence. The agony of being thus torn from their temple and their home and the land they loved cured them forever of material idolatry; but they fell headlong into another and subtler idolatry—the idolatry of forms and ceremonies, the idolatry of the dead letter of their law. Pharisaism was only a new idolatry, and it was, in some respects, more dangerous than the old. It was more dangerous because more self-satisfied, more hopelessly impenitent; more dangerous because, being idolatry, it passed itself off as the perfection of faithful worship. Hence it plunged them into a yet deadlier iniquity. Baal worshippers had murdered the Prophets; Pharisees crucified the Lord of Life.

4. What gives this tendency its strength? The Jews were tempted to worship these idols because they saw in the lives of the nations around them that emancipation from shame, from conscience, from restraint, from the stern and awful laws of morality, for which all bad men sigh. They longed for that slavery of sin which would be freedom from righteousness. It was not the revolting image of Molech that allured them; it was the spirit of hatred, the fierce delight of the natural wild beast which lurks in the human heart. Molech was but the projection

into the outward of ghastly fears born of man's own guilt; the consequent impulse to look on God as a wrathful, avenging Being, to be propitiated only by human agony and human blood; and as One whom (so whispered to them a terrified selfishness) it was better to propitiate by passing their children through the fire than to let themselves suffer from His rage. It was not any image of Mammon that allured them to worship that abject spirit. It was the love of money, which is a root of all evil; it was covetousness, which is idolatry. And why should they worship the degraded Baal-Peor? Just because he was degraded; just because of "those wanton rites which cost them woe."

¶ Idolatry, kneeling to a monster. The *contrary* of Faith—not *want* of Faith. Idolatry is faith in the wrong thing, and quite distinct from Faith in *No* thing, the "Dixit Insipiens." Very wise men may be idolaters, but they cannot be atheists.[1]

¶ Do these tendencies not reveal themselves still? Is it not possible that we form to ourselves false conceptions of God? We think of Him on the one hand as a self-willed despot, or we think of Him on the other hand as a sentimental father, who has within Him no power of anger or of passion. Again, have we not thought of Him too often as an indifferent proprietor,—forgive the homeliness of the figure of speech,—an absentee landlord, who collects rents on Sundays, and cares nothing about what happens to His property during the week? How often shall we have to plead guilty to this charge, that we have a god to suit our own convenience; that we accommodate the doctrine of God which the Bible contains, and which Jesus uttered finally for the world, to our own low level of life; that we have allowed our selfishness to blur the vision of God, and to make or create a new god according to our own understanding?[2]

II.

Forms of Idolatry.

1. *Idolatry manifests itself at times in gross and material forms.*—What was the sin of Jeroboam? That he set up golden images at Dan and Bethel, and in doing so provided for the people a representation of God. When Jeroboam set up those golden images, he had no idea of setting up new gods. That was not the

[1] Ruskin, *The Bible of Amiens* (*Works*, xxxiii. 154). [2] G. Campbell Morgan.

sin of Jeroboam. In the wilderness, when the men, waiting for Moses, according to the ancient story, made a golden calf, they were not making any new god. When we read the story carefully, we discover that they were making a likeness of Jehovah, and when they had made their golden calf and bowed themselves before it, they observed a feast of Jehovah. That was the sin of Jeroboam also; not the setting up of a new deity, not the introduction into the national life of a god borrowed from surrounding countries, but an attempt to help Israel to know Jehovah by a likeness, a representation of Him which should be set up at Dan and Bethel. In so doing, Jeroboam was not breaking the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods," but the second, "Thou shalt not make any likeness of God."

We go a little further on in the history of Israel, and we find Ahab. The sin of Ahab was different from Jeroboam's in that he introduced other deities and placed them beside Jehovah. He built temples for Baal and established the worship of Baal. That was not a representation of Jehovah, but another deity. The sin of Ahab was that he broke the first of the words of the Decalogue. The breach of the second word of the Decalogue always precedes the breach of the first in the history of believing peoples. First, something to set up to help us to see and understand God and then presently other gods usurping the place of God. First, a false conception of God, and we worship it; secondly, some other deity by the side of God.

¶ Dr. Buchanan, who was an eye-witness of the worship of Juggernaut in India, describes what he saw. The Temple of Juggernaut has been standing for eight or nine hundred years. The idol is like a man, with large diamonds for eyes; with a black face, and a mouth foaming with blood. Well, he says he saw this idol put upon a large carriage, nine or ten times as high as the biggest man one ever saw. And then the men, women and children (tens and hundreds of thousands were there together) began to draw the carriage along. The wheels made deep marks in the ground as it went along. And here there was a man who lay down before it, and the wheels went over him and killed him on the spot. And again there was a woman, who in the same way lay down before the idol, thinking she was sure to get to heaven if she was crushed beneath that idol's carriage wheels. And he saw children there drawing the idol. And he tells about two little children sitting crying beside their dying mother, who

had come to the city of the idol, and perished there from fatigue and want. And when they were asked where their home was, they said they had no home but where their mother was. And that mother was dying before her time because of her idolatry. Well might he have told such little ones how foolish and how wrong such conduct was, and said to them, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."[1]

¶ As we were preparing a foundation for the Church, a huge and singular-looking round stone was dug up, at sight of which the Tannese stood aghast. The eldest Chief said,—

"Missi, that stone was either brought there by Karapanamun (the Evil Spirit), or hid there by our great Chief who is dead. That is the Stone God to which our forefathers offered human sacrifices; these holes held the blood of the victim till drunk up by the Spirit. The Spirit of that stone eats up men and women and drinks their blood, as our fathers taught us. We are in greatest fear!"

A Sacred Man claimed possession, and was exceedingly desirous to carry it off; but I managed to keep it, and did everything in my power to show them the absurdity of these foolish notions. Idolatry had not, indeed, yet fallen throughout Tanna, but one cruel idol, at least, had to give way for the erection of God's House on that benighted land.[2]

2. *There is also an intellectual idolatry* when our own false notions are allowed to usurp the place of truth. The first meaning of the word "idols" is false, shadowy, fleeting images; subjective phantoms; wilful illusions; cherished fallacies. This is the sense in which the word is used by our great English philosopher, Lord Bacon. He speaks of "idols of the tribe," false notions which seem inherent in the nature of man, and which, like an unequal mirror mingling its own nature with that of the light, distort and refract it. There are also "idols of the cave." Every man has in his heart some secret cavern in which an idol lurks, reared there by his temperament or his training, and fed with the incense of his passions, so that a man, not seeking God in His word or works, but only in the microcosm of his own heart, thinks of God not as He is, but as he chooses to imagine Him to be. And there are "idols of the market-place," false conceptions of God which spring from men's intercourse with one another, and from the fatal force of words. And there are "idols of the school," false notions which

[1] W. H. Gray, *The Children's Friend*, 111. [2] *John G. Paton*, i. 201.

come from the spirit of sect, and system, and party, and formal theology.

¶ All sin is an untruth, a defiance of the true order of earth and heaven. In one of Hort's great sayings, Every thought which is base or vile or selfish is first of all untrue. These are the idols from which we have to keep ourselves. Whatever you think of God in your inmost heart, you will live accordingly. Whatever idol you make Him into, that idol will make you like itself.[1]

¶ George Herbert says that if you look on the pane of glass in a window, you may either let your eye rest on the glass, or you may look through the glass at the blue heaven beyond it. Now Beauty, Truth, and Goodness are windows through which we may see God. But, on the other hand, just as a man who looks at a window may let his eye rest on the pane of glass, instead of using the glass as a medium through which he can look at the glowing scene beyond, so we may allow our minds to rest on Beauty, or Truth, or Goodness, instead of using these as media through which to contemplate God.[2]

¶ Like all those who find their vent in Art, Jenny Lind seemed always as if her soul was a homeless stranger here amid the thick of earthly affairs, never quite comprehending why the imperfect should exist, never quite able to come down from the lighted above and form her eyes to the twilight of the prison and the cave.[3]

3. *But most frequently idolatry assumes a practical shape.*—What does St. John mean by an idol? Does he mean that barbarous figure of Diana which stood in the great temple, hideous and monstrous? No! he means anything, or any person, that comes into the heart and takes the place which ought to be filled by God, and by Him only. What I prize most, what I trust most utterly, what I should be most forlorn if I lost, what is the working aim of my heart—that is my idol. In Ephesus it was difficult to have nothing to do with heathenism. In that ancient world their religion, though it was a superficial thing, was intertwined with daily life in a fashion that puts us to shame. Every meal had its libation, and almost every act was knit by some ceremony or other to a god; so that Christian men and

[1] H. M. Gwatkin, *The Eye for Spiritual Things*, 94.
[2] Hugh Price Hughes, *The Philanthropy of God*, 229.
[3] H. Scott Holland, *Personal Studies*, 18.

women had almost to go out of the world, in order to be free from complicity in the all-pervading idol-worship. Now, although the form has changed, and the fascinations of old idolatry belong only to a certain stage in the world's culture and history, the temptation to idolatry remains just as subtle, just as all-pervasive, and the yielding to it just as absurd.

¶ Just consider what your feelings would be, were a heathen king to conquer this land, and to set up the images of his gods in the beautiful cathedral at Salisbury, where so many generations have been accustomed to worship God and His Son. Yet the heart of a Christian is far more beautiful, and far more precious, and far dearer to God, than that cathedral. The cathedral at Salisbury will not last for ever; Christ did not die for it, He did not purchase it with His own blood. But us He has bought; for us He has paid a price, that we might be His for all eternity. What, then, must be His feelings, to see His own hearts defiled and polluted by being given up to idols?[1]

Hear, Father! hear and aid!
If I have loved too well, if I have shed,
In my vain fondness, o'er a mortal head
Gifts, on Thy shrine, my God, more fitly laid,
If I have sought to live
But in one light, and made a mortal eye
The lonely star of my idolatry,
Thou that art Love, oh! pity and forgive![2]

¶ Many people spend their life as some African tribes do,—constructing idols, finding they are not the oracles they fancied, and breaking them in pieces to seek others. They have an uninteresting succession of perfect friends and infallible teachers. How many need the angel's word, "See thou do it not."[3]

¶ I went out into the garden to walk before dinner, and with difficulty refrained my tears to think how oft and with what sweet delight I had borne my dear, dear boy along that walk, with my dear wife at my side; but had faith given me to see his immortality in another world, and rest satisfied with my Maker's will. Sir Peter Lawrie called after dinner, and besought me, as indeed have many, to go and live with him; but nothing shall tempt me from this sweet solitude of retirement, and activity of consolation, and ministry to the afflicted. . . . When he was gone

[1] A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, 493.
[2] Mrs. Hemans.
[3] John Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 3.

I went forth upon my outdoor ministry, and as I walked to Mr. Whyte's, along the terraces overlooking those fields where we used to walk, three in one, I was sore, sore distressed, and found the temptation to "idolatry of the memory"; which the Lord delivered me from—at the same time giving the clue to the subject which has been taking form in my mind lately, to be treated as arising out of my trial; and the form in which it presented itself is "the idolatry of the affections," which will embrace the whole evil, the whole remedy, and the sound condition of all relations.[1]

4. *But we must not imagine that God calls upon us to hide every sign of affection.*—It is true that Jesus said "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me"; but He also denounced those Pharisees who refused to help their parents under the pretence that they gave so liberally to the Temple treasury.

¶ William Black, in his story *In Far Lochaber*, describes a household "where every natural instinct was repressed as being in itself something lawless; where the father held that he could not love God truly if he showed any demonstrative affection for his children." In his own early home in Glasgow, Black had been brought up in that way. There was genuine family affection but no outward token of it. He revolted from that afterwards, very naturally, and the training of his own three children was very different. But that was the old Scottish idea, having its root in religion—"Keep yourselves from idols." Mothers, losing a child, have sometimes said, "I made too much of an idol of my child, and God has punished me by taking it away." No, no. Do not hide, do not limit natural affection in the name of religion. You make an idol of your child if you would do anything dishonourable for the child's sake; if you say, as it were, my love for the child justifies me; or if you spoil the child by over-indulgence, or by want of rebuke when it does wrong. But do not in the name of religion hide or diminish the tokens of affection. There cannot be too much of that in the home life.

I took the poker, a few minutes before writing this, to break a piece of coal on the fire, and got a painful shock. I struck again, and *struck harder*, without feeling anything. I had struck the second time in the right place, about a third from the end of the poker. And human love may be *more* manifested, instead of less, when the love of God is at the root of it. The tokens of

[1] *The Life of Edward Irving*, i. 258.

the earthly love will not then by any means injure or impair the heavenly.

I could not love thee, dear, so much
Loved I not honour more.[1]

¶ We cannot know or enjoy or love the world too much, if God's will controls us. Has a mother anything but joy in watching the little daughter's devotion to her doll? Not until the child is so absorbed that she cannot hear her mother's voice. Did anyone ever love the world more than Jesus did? Yet was anyone ever so loyal to the Father's will? Worldliness is not love of the world but slavishness to it.[2]

III.

Defence against Idolatry.

How are we to guard ourselves against idols? What is the defence?

1. *We must cherish the vision of the true God and eternal life.*—We have that vision in Christ. If I would know God, I must see Him in Christ. And if the God I am worshipping is any other than the Christ who came to reveal Him then the God I am worshipping is not the true God, and I have become an idolater. We cannot see God, cannot apprehend God, save as by the revelation that He has made of Himself. In that holy and infinite mystery of incarnation there is an adaptation of God Himself to man's own method of finding God.

2. *Another defence will be found in our love of truth.*—It is not by learning or by culture or even by worship that we come to the knowledge of God. The utmost that even worship can do is to cleanse us for our higher duties—those duties of common life in which our God reveals Himself, in joy and sorrow, in sickness and in health alike. Even the Supper of the Lord would be a mockery, if Christ were not as near us in every other work of truth we do. Only let us be true, true in every fibre of our being, and truth of thought shall cleanse our eyes to see the truth of God which is the light of life.

[1] John S. Maver. [2] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 10.

¶ The easiest lesson in the school of truth is to do our work in the spirit of truth. Petty as it may seem, it is the earthward end of a ladder that reaches up to heaven. It is a greater work to give the cup of cold water than raise the dead. Our single duty here on earth is to bend all our heart and all our soul and all our mind to the single task of learning the love of truth, for the love of truth is the love of God.[1]

3. *But it is not only our own effort that is needed;* for just a sentence or two before, the Apostle had said: "He that is born of God"—that is, Christ—"keepeth us." So our keeping of ourselves is essentially our letting Him keep us. Stay inside the walls of the citadel, and you need not be afraid of the besiegers; go outside by letting your faith flag, and you will be captured or killed. Keep yourselves by clinging to "him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless." Seek fellowship with Him who is the only true God, and is able to satisfy your whole nature, mind, heart, will; and these false deities will have no power to tempt you to bow the knee.

"The Lord thy Keeper," then: 'tis writ for thee,
By night and day, wayworn and feeble sheep:
Without, within, He shall thy Guardian be;
And e'en to endless ages He shall keep
Thy wandering heart.

[1] H. M. Gwatkin, *The Eye for Spiritual Things*, 94.

Self-Keeping.

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SELF-KEEPING.

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.—Jude 20, 21.

1. JUDE is the prophet of the Apostasy. He sounds the final note of warning. The key word is "kept." Those who embrace the faith and contend for the faith are "preserved" unto the day of presentation; those who reject and oppose the faith are "reserved" unto the day of retribution. Those who kept not their first estate, and are kept for judgment, are contrasted with those who keep themselves in the love of God, and are kept by His power.

¶ Most travellers in foreign countries follow about the same route of travel. They see the same cathedrals, art galleries, and bits of scenery that thousands before them have seen. Once in a while some one insists on leaving the well-beaten routes and exploring less frequented places of interest. It is safe to say that there are many beautiful things in those countries which do not lie along the frequented routes. There are mountains, and lakes, and brooks—scenes of beauty that cannot be counted—which only those who step out of the well-beaten paths ever see.

There are well-beaten routes in the Scripture, chapters that are read over and over again by the multitude who are content to see and know what the multitude sees and knows. But whoever goes into the unfrequented places finds beautiful things. Here in Jude—hidden away where those who follow the usual Biblical route would never see it—is this: "Keep yourselves in the love of God."[1]

2. When this verse occurs, the turning-point of the Epistle has just been passed. The thunder-storm of invective, which

[1] G. W. Hinckley.

the writer has been hurling against certain godless disturbers of the purity and peace of the Church, spends itself almost abruptly. and the Epistle seems to gather to a close among the quiet sunset-light of a sky that has been clarified by the storm. These last calm sentences are directly for the saints whom he loves. "But ye," says he, "see that ye make a contrast to all this vapid corruption. The contrast which already exists between your condition and theirs, your prospects and theirs, let it be carried forth into a contrast between your conduct and theirs, your habits and theirs. Keep yourselves in the love of God."

¶ "Keep yourselves in the love of God" does not mean keep yourselves loving God, but keep believing and rejoicing that God loves you. "Conviction" is a good word there, because it comes from *con* and *victum*—*con*quered, or *vinculum*—a chain. Be conquered, be enchained, by the thought that God loves you. "Keep" means guard, protect, as in a fortress. Live in this castle, and no enemy of doubt or fear can by any means hurt you.[1]

I.

The Duty of Self-Keeping.

1. The central thought that lies in this passage is that we are in charge of ourselves. To keep ourselves—to be ever vigilant amid the perils that beset us, and steer our course aright—this is the main work of life.

There is a law pervading all animate and inanimate nature called by the scientists of to-day the law of conformity to type. By this law every living thing is compelled to stamp upon its offspring the image of itself. The fish produces its like, and the bird its like. The basis of all forms of animal and herbal life is one. There is no difference between the protoplasm which is destined to develop into a man, and that which is to become a herb, or one of the lower animals. How then does the difference arise? What is the secret of varieties in Nature? Scientists tell us it is this law of conformity to type. Bird life builds up a bird. Man life builds up a man. Now, if man were only the stuff of which trees are made he would still be subject to this law of con-

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 16.

formity to type. But it would be automatically. He would have no conscious individual share in helping on the process. But add the elements of free will, and intellectual faculties, and moral sense, and spiritual affections, and we have a creature both subject to and greater than this law. We cannot, indeed, evade or overcome the law. But we can determine the way in which it will act through us. God gives up to us the power of forming character. Our birth was His. Our vital powers are His. Our heredities are His. But our truest, vitallest, God-aspiring or God-shunning self—that is our own. By what means shall we assist this law of conformity to type to mould our lives after the image of our Creator? Let us keep ourselves in the love of God; let no meaner ends of life so engross us that we lose sight of this our high calling of God.

2. There are two sides to this keeping: a Divine side and a human side.

(1) *Our Lord keeps us.*—Perhaps it is difficult for some to believe that we who are upon the earth can really know ourselves to be always, without interruption, in our Lord's hands and under His power. How much clearer and more glorious does the truth become when the Spirit discovers to us that Christ is in us; and that, not only as a tenant in a house, or water in a glass, in such a fashion that they continue quite distinct, but rather as the soul is in the body, animating and moving every part of it, and never to be separated from each other except by a violent death. It is thus that Christ dwells in us, penetrating our whole nature with His nature. The Holy Spirit came for the purpose of making Him thus deeply present within us. As the sun is high in the firmament above us, and yet by his heat penetrates our bones and marrow and quickens our whole life, so the Lord Jesus, who is exalted high in heaven, penetrates our whole nature by His Spirit in such a way that all our willing, and thinking, and feeling are animated by Him. Once this fact is fully grasped, we no longer think of an external keeping through a person outside of us in heaven, but rather become convinced that our whole individual life is itself quickened and possessed by One who, not in a human but in a Divine, all-penetrating manner, occupies and fills the heart. Then we see how natural, how certain, how blessed it is

that the indwelling Jesus always maintains the fulness of the Spirit.

¶ Some maimed bird from the woods is brought into the house and the children want to tend it with all the gentleness of hospital nurses. They stretch out entreating hands and make pretty speeches, spread for it royal banquets, offer it a generous partnership in the use of their toys. But there is no common groundwork of ideas between them. It cannot read these signs of friendship, and the poor thing is as unhappy as though hawks were hovering in the clouds. If it has not already died of fright, the first time the window sash is open it flies away to the woods. It cannot appreciate or interpret the love which would fain woo its friendship in a strange world. It lacks power to perceive. But God's love is conscious of all other loves, and has the power, moreover, of interpreting itself to willing and lowly hearts. It knows where to find the first sign of this ethereal affection, and how to enter into fellowship with it.[1]

¶ The love of God in our hearts is a gift from the Lord; it is a fire which lights up all things arid, and whoever is so disposed can instantly feel it warm and inflame his heart.[2]

Lord, a happy child of Thine,
  Patient through the love of Thee,
In the light, the life divine,
  Lives and walks at liberty.

Leaning on Thy tender care,
  Thou hast led my soul aright;
Fervent was my morning prayer,
  Joyful is my song to-night.

O my Saviour, Guardian true,
  All my life is Thine to keep;
At Thy feet my work I do,
  In Thy arms I fall asleep.[3]

(2) *We must keep ourselves.*—This can only mean that we ought to love the Lord our God with the full force of decision and purpose. In the sovereign faculty of will metaphysicians find the centre and strength of personality. Our love to God must not be vague sentiment tincturing our talk with a pale poetry, but the settled purpose and determination of the soul commanding, com-

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Alienated Crown*, 363.
[2] Savonarola. [3] A. L. Waring.

pelling, triumphing in all the crises of life. Love without will is the merest froth; but springing from the depths of the soul, expressing a firm and hearty conviction and resolution, it passes into the master-passion of life. Let it, then, be our settled purpose to keep a warm heart. "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." I will not permit abounding iniquity to chill my heart, or abounding prosperity to steel it. I will not allow Nature, humanity, self, or any idols of the world, to have dominion over me, but I will love Thee; I will watch, and, lest time and circumstance should spoil the fervour and freshness of the heart, I will ever welcome new awakenings and inspirations.

¶ It is not a command to love Him, but to keep yourselves in His love, objects of His loving. Do you know how to do it? If a mother should write to her boy and at the close of the letter should say, "You have a good teacher, keep yourself in his love," he would know what to do. He would be careful not to disobey, thoughtful not to displease, watchful to render any service in his power. If there were some sickly boy, and we should tell him he was to be excused from school for a few weeks, and should say to him, "Keep yourself in the sunshine," would he know what to do? He would keep out of the shadows, and that is easily done. If this building were casting a shadow, he would keep on the sunny side. If yonder tree were casting a shadow, he would keep away from it. He would remember the injunction, "Keep yourself in the sunshine—out of the shadow." There is a place where the unmanly and the impure congregate. The influence of the place is baleful—a dark, damp shadow. Keep out of it; and keep in the love of God.[1]

3. *The best way to keep ourselves in the love of God is to be always in the fulness of the Spirit.*—There is a touchstone about the Holy Ghost that discovers evil, and evil cannot live before Him. This is a highly organized age. We are all living in the midst of environments of many kinds. There are streams of influences that bear in upon us from without, and there is a peculiar joyousness about the consecrated life,—a spiritual exhilaration—and with that exhilaration there is an accessibility to human sympathy and influence, and in all these there are perpetual dangers which we must be on our guard against so that we may not be drawn away from the love of Jesus Christ.

[1] G. W. Hinckley.

¶ Love is not to be a rare mood of the soul, but its sublime habit. Travellers in the East tell of the striking difference in the appearance of the same tract of country at different seasons of the year. What at one time is a garden, glowing with brilliant hues, and rich with pasture, at another is an absolute waste, frightful and oppressive from its sterility. So is it too commonly with the soul, which at one time is like a watered garden glowing in the heavenly sunshine and then directly cold and desolate. It ought not so to be. God's love to us is ever glowing, revealing itself in new and richer tokens, and our love to Him should reflect the same constancy.[1]

¶ The brightest lamp will burn dim in an impure or rarefied atmosphere, but William Burns was enabled so to keep himself "in the love of God" that he was but little affected by his surroundings. Prayer was as natural to him as breathing, and the Word of God his God as necessary as daily food. He was always cheerful, always happy, witnessing to the truth of his own memorable words: I think I can say, through grace, that God's presence or absence alone distinguishes places to me.[2]

At cool of day, with God I walk
  My garden's grateful shade;
I hear His voice among the trees,
  And I am not afraid.

He is my stay and my defence;—
  How shall I fail or fall?
My helper is Omnipotence!
  My ruler ruleth all.

The powers below and powers above
  Are subject to His care;—
I cannot wander from His love
  Who loves me everywhere.

Thus dowered, and guarded thus, with Him
  I walk this peaceful shade;
I hear His voice among the trees,
  And I am not afraid![3]

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *Themes for Hours of Meditation*, 157.
[2] *Hudson Taylor in Early Years*, 346. [3] C. A. Mason.

II.

The Means of Self-Keeping.

The means of self-keeping are twofold—"building up yourselves on your most holy faith," and "praying in the Holy Spirit."

1. Jude here employs an architectural expression to set forth his meaning. In the various temples and public buildings of an Eastern city were furnished beautiful and chaste examples of the builder's art, and the transition to man as a wonderful piece of architecture would be easy. Hence we find such expressions as "Ye are God's building," "Ye are temples of the Holy Ghost," and the words of the text, "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith."

This metaphor of building, so common in the New Testament, suggests patient industry, thoughtful method, graduated progress, upward aspirations. It indicates a design and plan. The house of the soul is being fashioned. The inward man is growing towards the pattern of the Heavenly Man, the type to which the Spiritual Architect conforms His handiworks. The structural principles are embodied in the faith.

(1) The Christian character is like a mosaic formed of tiny squares in all but infinite numbers, each one of them separately set and bedded in its place. You have to build by a plan; you have to see to it that each day has its task, each day its growth. You have to be content with one brick at a time. It is a lifelong task, till the whole be finished. And not until we pass from earth to heaven does our building work cease. Continuous effort is the condition of progress.

¶ A Christian character is not reared as a coral structure is, by instinct. It demands a sustained effort of intelligent will. The work is laboriously slow—slow, yet urgent. There is need we should bring to bear upon it something of the systematic steadiness which tells so marvellously in the meaner sphere of our worldly work—permitting to ourselves no half-heartedness in it; setting upon it the banded force of all the faculties of body and soul and spirit; pushing it on in frost and rain, and by light of torch when the daylight fails us.[1]

[1] J. A. Kerr Bain, *For Heart and Life*, 87

¶ Few things can be so offensive to an architect as a building erected in such a way as to show all the traces of the hurry, carelessness, and incapacity of the workmen. There are structures whose very defects have gained them a world-wide notoriety. We have all heard of the leaning tower of Pisa, the top of which projects fifteen feet farther out than the base, and which presents the appearance of a building about to fall. The same impression is produced by the spire of a certain church in Yorkshire. Both structures are altogether out of plumb, and afford ocular demonstration of bad construction. Such buildings are like some characters we meet with, into the building-up of which there have entered an unskilful handling of tools and a neglect of the proportions requisite in a properly constructed edifice. If we are to have a true character we must build wisely and well, looking for our specifications to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the dictates of conscience, the precepts of the Bible, and the peerless character of Christ.[1]

In the elder days of art,
Builders wrought with equal care
Each minute and unseen part;
For the gods see everywhere.
Let us do our work as well,
Both the unseen and the seen;
Make the House where God should dwell,
Beautiful, entire, and clean.
Else our work is incomplete—
Standing, in these walls of time,
Broken stairways, where the feet
Stumble as they seek to climb.

(2) The only adequate foundation is to be found in a right relation to Jesus Christ. This is involved in the expression, "building up yourselves on your most holy faith." Faith as a mere act is the same in all cases; it involves the same conditions, and follows the same processes, in all its operations. Considered in itself, faith has nothing in it to make one of its acts higher than another. What, then, constitutes the most holy faith? We answer, the object that faith apprehends and appropriates. The higher and holier the object believed, to that degree the faith exercised becomes higher and holier. And as the infinite Christ of God is the most holy object of faith, so the belief that brings

[1] M. Johnson.

about a right relation to Him deserves to be called the most holy faith. Such a foundation involves every other, just as the greater necessarily includes the lesser. There is involved in it every real good. It embraces every department of life, and enters into all its complex and diversified aspects. The social and political, the mental, moral and religious, are all alike parts of its vast empire; and whatever relates to these in their development and operation receives its sanction and benediction. While it has an essentially Godward aspect, it has, at the same time, to do with all the relations in which men stand to their fellows. It makes our relation to Christ the principle and motive for fulfilling our duties to others.

¶ Ministering, some years ago now, in Switzerland, I was sorry as I left the beautiful little mountain church to observe that the rock upon which one of the buttresses of the chancel was built was crumbling. My friend said to me: "You could not quote that as an illustration of the safety of the house built upon a rock." I said, "No, but I can quote it as an illustration of the insecurity of a house built upon what looks like a fair foundation. That rock looked fair and strong, or it would never have been chosen." We know how St. Paul had built for many years upon the fair appearance of morality and ceremonial observance, and how at length he cast them to the winds, "not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."[1]

2. Praying in the Holy Spirit.

(1) Prayer of some sort marks every religion, for prayer in its most general sense is an appeal to God. But Christian prayer is the prayer of faith, and not merely of form; it is prayer of the heart, and not merely of the lips; it is prayer which rests not in bodily posture, but in spiritual power. The Christian prays as he lives and lives as he prays. But his power for prayer is not in himself, for it is the Spirit dwelling within him that enables him to pray. Nor is true prayer merely *by* the Holy Ghost; it is "*in* the Holy Ghost," for spiritual life is the sphere of spiritual prayer. Pray then, pray always, if you would keep in touch with things unseen, if you would keep your hearts open to God and heaven. Pray by the Holy Ghost by yielding your will to Him if you

[1] E. W. Moore, in *The Keswick Week*, 1905, p. 165.

would worship in spirit and in truth, and feel the power of prayer and obtain the blessings you seek. But pray *in* the Holy Ghost by honouring His presence within you, and hearkening to His voice, if you would know the peace and joy of heavenly fellowship and maintain a lively sense of the love of God.

¶ The prayer which helps us to keep in the love of God is not the petulant and passionate utterance of our own wishes, but is the yielding of our desires to the impulses divinely breathed upon us. As Michael Angelo says, "The prayers I make will then be sweet indeed, If Thou the spirit give by which I pray." Our own desires may be hot and vehement, but the desires that run parallel with the Divine will, and are breathed into us by God's own Spirit, are the desires which, in their meek submissiveness, are omnipotent with Him whose omnipotence is perfected in our weakness.[1]

(2) Praying in the Spirit is the surest defence against the evils that arise from a low moral temperature. In some parts of the world, malaria and tropical heat speedily turn healthy and capable colonists into sickly loiterers and rickety "ne'er-do-weels." No race seems able to toil under the frightful conditions of climate which prevail on the Isthmus of Panama. And, on the other hand, some climates are so crisp and exhilarating that the laggard finds it difficult to do less than a fair day's work. Unknown ingredients in the air seem to accelerate the blood and spur to strenuous exertion. The qualities of the work done by poet, painter, musician, may almost be told in the terms of the atmospheric pressure prevailing at the time. Genius, just as much as the unopened flower bud, needs the bright, bracing day to bring out its splendour.

And the soul requires for the reaching out of its highest powers towards God a refined and well-balanced element, which we can describe only as "climate" or "atmosphere." The difference between praying on the mere level of our natural perceptions and sympathies, and praying in a realm pervaded by the unfailing inspirations of the Spirit, is not unlike the difference between drudgery on a tropical swamp and movement on a glorious tableland. In the one case prayer is an effort, a burden, a vexation, and an idle penance; in the other, a joy, a sunrise, a melodious outrush of upper springs, glad spontaneity, life

[1] A. Maclaren, *The Unchanging Christ*, 178.

pulsating with the sense of power and victory. The prayer imposed upon us by slavish conventions or habits, the prime motives of which have shrivelled away, seems to open all the channels of the life to poison, disease, religious degeneration. But when the breath of the Spirit pervades the shrine in which we pray, and calls up a gracious environment which we can carry about with us in our daily walk, prayer acquires new attributes, assumes fresh attractions, and springs to unknown victories.

¶ The under side of every leaf is furnished with thousands of tiny mouths, through which the leaf breathes back upon the world the air it has purified and sweetened for human uses. And so the foliage of a mighty forest is like a cluster of fountains from which health and quickening alchemies are ever pouring, which supply the needs of all those kingdoms of life gathered under its shadow. And in the same way the Holy Spirit of God breathes upon us from every point of our environment. Through countless mouths His soul-quickening influences flow silently into us, neutralizing the doubt, sloth, and sin exhaled from the lower nature, so that we can breathe back our souls to God in faith and desire continuous as the river from God's throne.[1]

III.

The Inspiration of Self-Keeping.

"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

1. On what is it that our eye is to be set as the focus and fountain of all our encouragement in the grand task of our life? Is it the abundance of our labours? Is it certain rightful wages that those labours are earning? Is it even the satisfaction that the memory of them may bring us? No, it is nothing so poor as this. "Looking for—*mercy*." Still mercy—after all our hard work, our God-given work, in building, praying, keeping? Let us thank God that it is. Our work—it is blundering and inconstant; the worker—he is weak and unworthy; here, smiling around us out of the heaven which it makes so bright, is the Divine yet brotherly compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, no other encouragement could be at all so complete as this. It overflows

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Privilege*, 176.

upon every other. It is the sum of all tenderest things; it is the pledge of all that is most unimaginable in its gloriousness. Is our heart burdened about our passing fatigues or troubles or perils? It may be, till we look onward to that towards which mercy is ripening; then, present ills shall feel lighter, and past ones shall appear more utterly past. We must cultivate a busy-handed expectingness; if we do, it will almost become an expectant seeing—a looking upon the actual dawn of the hastening day.

¶ Heard of a poor woman in Windsor Forest who was asked if she did not feel lonely in that exceeding isolation. "Oh no; for Faith closes the door at night and Mercy opens it in the morning."[1]

Now wilt me take for Jesus' sake,
  Nor cast me out at all;
I shall not fear the foe awake,
  Saved by Thy City wall;
But in the night with no affright
  Shall hear him steal without,
Who may not scale Thy wall of might,
  Thy Bastion, nor redoubt.

Full well I know that to the foe
  Wilt yield me not for aye,
Unless mine own hand should undo
  The gates that are my stay;
My folly and pride should open wide
  Thy doors and set me free
'Mid tigers striped and panthers pied
  Far from Thy liberty.

Unless by debt myself I set
  Outside Thy loving ken,
And yield myself by weight of debt
  Unto my fellow-men.
Deal with my guilt Thou as Thou wilt,
  And "hold" I shall not cry,
So I be Thine in storm and shine,
  Thine only till I die.[2]

2. Mercy is kindness to the undeserving, and in that point it rises higher than even grace. Grace is kindness to the non-

[1] *Journals of Caroline Fox*, ii. 141.

[2] Katharine Tynan.

deserving, to those who have no claim upon it, but yet who may be in themselves no unworthy recipients. But mercy implies demerit; it is kindness to the sinful, it is kindness to the lost. Now, this is what Christians have to look for even to the end. Never will they be claimants of right; always will they be suppliants of want. They would have it so. It would be no comfort to them to hear that ten years or a thousand years hence they will have earned their title to stand in an erect posture or with head covered before the great King. They know better. They are making new discoveries day by day, as of grace so of sin, as of good so of vice. Mercy they ask and mercy they look for, only with a growing sureness and certainty that that mercy bought with blood is theirs. Eternal life fills the far horizon of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ—is its security and its safeguard.

¶ I was one day working hard in my study and a message came to me to say that a certain person was ill. The first feeling in my heart was one of vexation. I crushed that, and rose up and put on my hat and coat, and went away as fast as I could. I was going down one of the Edinburgh streets, and all of a sudden this thought came to me: "Death will come like that. You will be in the midst of your work, and *the message of the Master will come all of a sudden,* and you will have to rise and go." Even that one saw as simply an incident in the progress that is to be eternal. Death does not matter. The Master may come and call us right away into the glory, or it may be His will that we should die; but that is just simply an incident, a forward step, as we keep resting daily on mercy unto eternal life.[1]

Though waves and storms go o'er my head,
  Though health and strength and friends be gone,
Though joy be withered all and dead,
  And every comfort be withdrawn;
On this my steadfast soul relies—
Jesus, Thy mercy never dies!

Fixed on this ground will I remain,
  Though my heart fail and flesh decay;
This anchor shall my soul sustain
  When earth's foundations melt away:
Mercy's full power I then shall prove,
Loved with an everlasting love.

[1] John Smith, in *The Keswick Week,* 1905, p. 164.